THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The Education of Peasants in Inter-War Poland

(C)

by

Karol Walter Adamowicz

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Education of Peasants in Inter-War Poland submitted by Karol Walter Adamowicz in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in History of Education.

Supervisor

Date July 15, 1988

DEDICATION

For ADAM

so that he may know about some of his roots.

Also, this little bit of advice which his Great-grandfather gave to his *Dziadzia* who, in turn, gave it to me:

Z Rad Dla Syna.

Chcesz kims byc w swiecie
To sie ucz,
Abys nie zginal w tlumie.
Bo nauka do potegi klucz,
Wtym moc kto wiecej umie.
Wiedz ze nie popchna tego wstecz,
Ani pochlona fale,
Kto umie chocby jedna rzecz,
Lecz umie doskonale!

ABSTRACT

An independent Polish state, known as the Second Republic (of Poland), existed during the brief "inter-war" period between 1918 and 1939. Among many ambitious projects and endeavours of this "new" state was the creation and implementation of a system of education which, at least in theory, was to provide for the educational needs of the entire population. This proved to be an exceptionally difficult undertaking.

The purpose of this study is to examine the reactions of peasants to the system of education and especially to the one implemented in the rural areas. Of particular interest are negative reactions - i.e. examples of resistance to education.

The approach of the study is from the peasantist or agrarian-populist perspective which is based on the premise that peasants are members of a "secondary society." It is essentially anthropological - i.e. the "two societies view." The peasants are observed to be living in a distinct and viable system or a way-of-life which differs from that of the nomadic hunters and gatherers of the primary society and also from that of the urban/industrial specialists and merchants of the tertiary. They (peasants) are also seen to possess a unique world-view which has been perpetuated by a strong oral tradition.

In Inter-war Poland, as in most other countries, the urbanites were the dominant group and as such they tended to

impose their will on the peasants. More importantly, since the numerically preponderant peasants were entering a nascent period of historical and political activity, the urban/industrial dominant group attempted to preserve its position in the country.

The imposition of a system of formal public education was done with a view to "assimilating" the peasants. In this way the political and economic position of the dominant group could be safeguarded and fears of the fulfillment of the Malthusian prediction could be allayed.

The peasants, lacking social homogeneity, resisted these efforts in varying degrees and in many different ways. Their resistance was most often not manifested as a class struggle but rather it was based on personal, individual, philosophic, social and economic considerations as determined by the strength of adherence to the traditional way-of-life.

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No doubt, Dr. Nick Kach, my thesis supervisor, must have felt this frustration most acutely, but he never stopped encouraging me. Over the years he has become more than a mentor - he has become a good friend. I feel tremendously indebted to Nick for his help and kindness, and in expressing my thanks I can truly say that without his guidance and encouragement this project would certainly never have reached completion.

I must also acknowledge that my wife, Marion, encouraged me "on the home front." She insisted that I keep

at it; she listened patiently to many hours of probably "boring" anecdotes and explanations; and, she read and commented on all of the chapters, sometimes doing so until the "wee hours." She also patiently looked after Adam, our son, during those many hours that I was working on this thesis.

Adam, who was perhaps too young to understand what I was doing, spent a lot of time with my parents - especially when Marion and I were both busy. I would like to thank my parents for taking on this additional burden on their time and energy, but also I would like to thank them for discussing the thesis topic and offering many insights and suggestions. In fact, it was their lives and experiences that caused me to become interested in the history of education in Inter-war Poland. These few words cannot adequately express my gratefulness to them for their inspiration, their guidance, and their care.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years it has become apparent to historians and laymen alike that historical monographs describing great events, personalities, and even social and political movements are most often not the record or story of all of the inhabitants of a given state or nation. Many such works are directly biased by being written either from the perspective of the dominant group, or more indirectly, but still purporting to take the objective standpoint (which may be anything from genuinely objective to radically revisionist in orientation). Actually, they all fall victim to the same fallacy by discussing the activities of this group vis-a-vis the dominant group.

These works, regardless of perspective, serve to ensconce the activities of the dominant group in positions of paramount historical importance. They thereby reinforce the notion that the activities of some groups are "historic" while those of others are, somehow, not. This rationalization causes large groups of people (usually from the lower social orders) who belong to societal categories labelled as "not historically conscious" or "not nationally conscious" - even (as in the case of the Byelorussians[1])

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[1]Slavs, mostly peasants inhabiting the forests and marshlands between the lands of the Polish-speaking and Russian-speaking peoples. The Byelorussians, while recognised as being a distinct group both linguistically and culturally, did not manifest strong nationalist tendencies until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. They are considered "non-historic" peoples because they had never formed or inhabited a uniquely Byelorussian "historic" state.

"non-historic" - to be purposely ignored, or else inadvertently overlooked, as participants in the historical process.

It is for these reasons that historians repeatedly fail to recognize the role of the nation's peasants in Polish history. While they acknowledge the peasants' existence, describe their changing living conditions and standards, and attempt to ascertain the levels of national consciousness of this body of people, they seldom make any serious efforts to assess the peasants' role in Polish history. They tend to treat this group and others that have not attained historical or national consciousness[2] in such a way as to make it appear that they have no vested interest in this process and therefore have very little input.

Two centuries of acceptance of this apparent fallacy has allowed for the perpetuation of an historicism based on the struggle of the Polish nation-state for one or another

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[2]For the purposes of this study, historical and national consciousness are defined as conceptual constructs required for active participation in the development of the nation or state (as characterized by the dominant groups). While it is apparent that historical consciousness is not entirely synonymous with national consciousness, the two concepts are considered to be inseparable in the Polish case. If a person accepts or becomes aware of his/her "Polishness" then one must accept the history of this state or nation - which is also the history of the dominant groups. Admittedly, the social structure of the Polish state has changed in the last one hundred and twenty-three years (since the emancipation of the serfs in Russian Poland), and continues to do so, but the groups which attained ascendancy during the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth centuries are still the dominant ones. The evolution or development of Polish society, particularly the largest social classes will be examined in greater detail in other sections of the next chapter.

form of independence or self-definition.[3] Historians from the non-Marxist "schools" , as well as their Marxist colleagues, all tend to view Polish history as such a linear process (or perhaps "struggle" - depending on the historiographical perspective of the historian) and therefore they cannot accommodate, within their particular paradigms of history, groups, like the traditional peasants,— whose tendencies would appear to be irrelevant or even anomolous.

While this problem is certainly not limited to Polish historiography, it has caused the written history of the Polish nation[4] to be incomplete in that there is no serious

---

[3]The first "modern" Polish historian was Bishop Adam Naruszewicz (1733 - 1796) who departed from the traditional literary "chronicles and verses" method of recording historical events when he wrote his six volumes of the *Historia narodu polskiego*(A History of the Polish Nation).Most notably, he had systematically collected the materials for this work and then presented his findings in a technical narrative style. This 'modern' method was also adopted by Joachim Lelewel (1796 - 1861) who developed a "Messianic" view of Polish history - "a historiosophical variant of Mickiewicz's allegory of Poland as the 'Christ of Nations'." (Davies, 1982, p.9.)

It is this "Messianic" tradition as it impressed itself upon the Nineteenth century 'Optimists' and 'Pessimists' and the modern 'Idealists' and 'Realists' which lingers even today either in the form of some linear process or as a dialectic shaped by the struggle for independence.

See: Norman Davies, God's Playground: A History of Poland.New York: Columbia University Press, 1982, vol.1, pp.3 - 22, for an excellent survey of Polish historiographical tendencies along with very useful bibliographical references for this fascinating subject area.

[4]The word "nation" should in this instance be understood to mean a "national culture society" and "nation" in the American sense which has it as "state" i.e. a territory with a population ruled by a government.[See: Jan Szczepanski, Polish Society. New York: Random House, 1970,p.44.]

scrutiny and analysis of the impact on history of the activities of the majority of the population. This deficiency has caused those peasants, who apparently did not demonstrate any recognizable kind of progress or even of enlightened or 'sensible' direction in their group aspirations and tendencies, i.e., those not yet imbued with a national consciousness, to be an unknown element in the history of their own nation. This may be understood in the sense that their real impact on the shaping of the modern Polish state is largely, if not almost completely, undetermined and unappreciated.

Given such a gap or void in extant histories of Poland, it is necessary to attempt to provide a more appropriate "historical background" - one that would be more cognizant of the fact that Polish history was shaped at least to some extent by the seemingly passive a-historic peasants. The role of this uniquely evolving body, which had over the centuries engaged in both peaceful and violent interaction with the dominant or upper classes of the Polish nation and state, ought to be described and fully analyzed so that a more complete history might become known.

What is being described and sought here is a change in historiographical approach and not the creation of yet another ethnographic fragment. It is possible that in this way the liberation of the peasants from some Spenglerian limbo may be at least partially accomplished. Certainly, the more interactive aspects of their existence would come to be

appreciated.

It is doubtful however, that the peasants preoccupied with subsistence - those peasants described by Spengler - will ever find a way of entering the stream of history as he defined or described it. He states that,

> All effectual history begins with the primary classes, nobility and priesthood, forming themselves and elevating themselves above the peasantry as such. ...with the coming of the City, the burgher, the *Tiers Etat*, history changes its style. But it is exclusively in these classes as such, in their class-consciousness, that the whole meaning of history inheres. *The peasant is historyless.*
>
> The peasant is the eternal man, independent of every Culture that ensconces itself in the cities. He precedes it, he outlives it, a dumb creature propagating himself from generation to generation, limited to soil-bound callings and aptitudes, a mystical soul, a dry, shrewd understanding that sticks to practical matters, the origin and the ever-flowing source of the blood that makes world-history in the cities.
>
> ...The present day piety of the peasant is older than Christianity; his gods are more ancient than those of any higher religion. Remove from him the pressure of the great cities and he will revert to the state of nature without feeling that he is losing anything. His real ethic, his real metaphysic, which no scholar has yet thought it worthwhile to discover, lie outside all religious and spiritual history, have in fact no history at all.[5]

If the "true" peasant indeed hasn't a place in history, this is because of his "basic" existence - or his ideal and harmonic relationship with nature and his lack of interaction with members of other communities or societies. He usually does not mindlessly exploit or needlessly oppose these in his quest for land and food. This inability to move and act on any grand scale however, usually prevents the

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[5]Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West. vol. II, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928, p.96.

subsistence level activities of the peasant from becoming history. Spengler was also cognizant of this lack of historic motion in the peasants' existence when he said that

> [h]istory means that something happens, becomes different from what it was, that conflict and opposition exist, are overcome, and produce new conflict. Thus history is battle. Where there is no opposition nothing happens.[6]
>
> World history has been made by wanderers - not by settled peasantry.... Peasantry endures history, which passes over it; the knight and the seafarer make it.[7]

Indeed, it is easy to exptrapolate from these notions that the peasant lives in "a bower of bliss on the bosom of Nature...."[8] In fact, Spengler would be among the first to point out that this just is not the case. The "noble peasant" or images of such a being living in blissful harmony with nature are nothing more than the conjurings of romantic story-tellers who have somehow become enamoured of such a beautified "paysannerie".[9]

In reality, the peasant's way of life is as harsh as it is hard, and it is entirely possible that people were driven to these basic relationships with the land and with each other because of the simple security that such a passive lifestyle could afford. Over time the classically superstitious repetition of successful activities or behaviours became the peasant traditions so glorified by romantic writers and folklorists.

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[6]Oswald Spengler, Aphorisms. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1967, p.48.
[7]Spengler, ibid., p.37.
[8]T. Zielinski, "The Peasant in Polish Literature" In The Slavonic Review, Vol.1, No.1, June 1922, p.594.
[9]Zielinski, ibid., pp.594 -597.

The peasants being, for the most part unaware of the supposedly idyllic conditions of their existence still, continue to engage almost exclusively in activities which tend to ensure survival. Instead of being adventurers or entrepreneurs on a large scale they prefer to limit the scope of their endeavours to agriculture or related usage of the land. Very often they reject those opportunities which might improve their material condition simply because these new methods or technologies differ from their 'tried and true' traditions. Ironically, while their adherence to 'safe' traditional ways helps to ensure their survival, it often keeps them in a very impoverished and ignorant (in so far as the rest of the world is concerned) state which even further complicates their reactions to new or foreign concepts.

Given such an indifferent and even hostile attitude to new ideas and also to interaction with other social classes, the peasants have created a system which is very nearly closed and self-sufficient. This however, has not prevented other classes from imposing their religions, languages, and other cultural traits upon this group , or even from exercising more physical manifestations of their will against the peasants such as enserfment. It is at their points of contact with new ideas or the will of some other group, - at such points of "opposition", - that the peasants enter written history. They leave it again once they have assimilated the new experience into their scheme.

Presumably, this "winking" into and out of recorded history could be kept up indefinitely but pressure from the expanding and increasingly powerful urban classes, which utilize rapidly advancing technologies, serve to undermine this ability. Inexorably, the peasants are being forced into historic existence.

It is important for historians to understand this and to adjust their research so that historically significant latent aspects of the peasants' existence, - i.e. those traditional attitudes, beliefs, ethics, et cetera, that are to some extent carried over to influence the peasant way of life in the period of historic consciousness, - are somehow accounted for.

Since formal public education tends to become a major juncture between the urban/industrial and the peasant societies, education as it relates to peasants in an urban dominated society, ought to be studied carefully. The reactions of the peasants to public education, which is a uniquely urban creation designed to transmit knowledge to the younger members of its society, are affected by their (peasant) world-view and by their acceptance or rejection of the techno-cultural information transmitted by these schools. Both the urban and the peasant perceptions of schools as media of instruction, inculcation or even indoctrination should be investigated. Furthermore, the reactions of the peasants to their particular perceptions of public education should be determined and analyzed. Not only

might this generate some currently unavailable insights into the dynamics of predominantly agrarian societies, like that of Inter-war Poland, but perhaps such knowledge may be useful for some future comparison to similar modern developments in other parts of the world, eg. India.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the reactions of the peasants to the system of formal public education created in Inter-war Poland. Of particular interest will be any negative reactions or resistances to education. Such an attitude best illustrates and exposes the "world-view" held by this group. A great deal of material, ranging from the "whiggish" congratulatory to the radical revisionist, has already been written. Perhaps, some new and insightful materials may be discovered through this more anthropological approach.

Primary sources such as letters and autobiographies of peasants found in two major sociological studies of Polish peasants, personal interviews and also first-hand accounts of peasant activities and behaviours will be examined. From these it will be possible to determine the attitudes toward, and impact of, the system of formal public education implemented in the rural areas of Inter-war Poland.

Numerous secondary sources, ranging from conservative to Marxist-revisionist, will also be consulted to try to

determine what the rationales behind the schemes for the "education of the peasants" were, and whether these were considered to be successful or not.

The historical background for the Inter-war period will be mapped out with special attention to the evolution or development of the peasant class of the society. The "evolution" of the peasants from the pre-historic past to the period of their awakening to historical consciousness will be traced. Special emphasis will then be placed on their political and ideological manifestations during the Inter-war period - the "heyday" of all of the world's "isms": nationalism, fascism, communism, populism - and even peasantism!

Above all, this study will try to make sense of the many apparent contradictions or paradoxes in Polish history by approaching them with the premise that many may be due to the collisions and reactions to the incompatiblity of two radically different world-views - the peasantist and urban/industrial.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This thesis which involves the determination and subsequent description of the role of the peasants in the shaping of the educational system implemented in Inter-war Poland, proposes to go beyond a simple explication of this historiographical concept. This chapter will provide a chronological outline of Polish history which has been expanded to include reference to the peasants. Such an expanded history will be used both as a guide and as a conceptual and even methodological reference to supplement materials on developments during the Inter-war period.

The periodization scheme used for this brief history is unique in that it follows the course of Polish history from its Polanian tribal or clan origins, through the establishment of a Polish kingdom, broadening its scope to include the multicultural amalgamation called the "Commonwealth", and out of necessity, it narrows down again to consider the processes of formation of an ethnically homogeneous republic. It differs from other schemes in that it emphasizes the forces "of" and "for" amalgamation and the multicultural character of the "Commonwealth" rather than incorporating all aspects of this time period into a history of 'Poland'.

The histories of many other nations and states like Lithuania, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Prussia, run into and out of this era and it would be a distortion of facts to attribute more than the intermittent existence of some

manifestations of Polish hegemony to it. In the fourteenth century Poland entered into an occasionally turbulent merger with Lithuania and became part of an organism which grew, changed, was dismembered, and finally in the twentieth century, disintegrated. The ethnically homogeneous Polish state which emerged should therefore only be considered as returned to its 'actual' or original status and not as an entity reduced from some previous era of grandeur (in which it was admittedly an important participant).

Virtually all other schemes tend to work from the "Polish" perspective either without fully recognising the importance and significance of the multicultural or amalgamation period or by ignoring the multicultural and conglomerate aspects of the Jagiellonian and Elective Monarchy "Commonwealth", and the Partition. In fact, several schemes[10], notably those shaped or influenced by socio-economic or Marxist notions of historical process, tend to distort the events of this period by making them appear to be part of some feudal and subsequent capitalist eras, typified by Polish territorial aggrandizement and cultural imperialism.

Considering the rather narrow and restrictive nature of the "Polish" perspective it should be apparent that the broader parameters of the multicultural view would not only allow for a less biased but for a more practical approach to writing a socially comprehensive history. Not only would

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[10]Stanislaw Arnold was the first to develop such a scheme based on Marxist notions of the historical process.

non-Polish ethnic groups be more favourably treated, but the development and diverse roles of the peasant classes could also be better understood. The resultant history would then become part of the basis for the major contentions of this study.

It is for these reasons and probably for some personal or esthetic considerations that a unique periodization scheme was developed. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that this is but another way of making at least one thousand years of "Polish" history comprehensible. Norman Davies writes,

> [the] events of a thousand years are as daunting to the historian who has to expound them, as to the reader who wants to learn about them. They are too complex to be comprehended in bulk; and served in one lump, are entirely undigestable. As a result they are customarily divided into chronological groups, or periods. For some historians, this 'periodization' is no more than an empirical exercise....For others, it is a matter of high seriousness, guided by the laws of philosophy and science.It is one of the unavoidable tasks of the trade. The manner in which it is undertaken reveals much, not only about History but also about the historian.[11]

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[11]Davies, 1982, op.cit., p.5.

A. Pre-history (? - 963 A.D.)

> The name of *Polska* (Poland) does not emerge until the very threshold of historic times in the tenth century, and then only as the domain of just one small Slavonic tribe, the *Polanie* ('the people of the open fields'), settled on the banks of the Warta in the vicinity of modern Poznan. The exact relationship of those *Polanie* to other Slavonic tribes, and perhaps to their non-Slavonic neighbours as well, is the subject of no certain knowledge.[12]

This excerpt from Norman Davies' second book on the history of Poland clearly indicates his rather unique position after perusal of the scant records of the existence of "pre-historic" peoples living in the area delineated by modern day Poland. He further states that "[t]here is no cause to suppose that one particular ethnic group could ever have enforced exclusive possession of so large an area; and in primitive conditions, cultural and linguistic assimilation must have proceeded with minimal speed."[13] His remarks appear to be more rational and therefore more compelling than those of many Polish historians (and German historians who have a tendency to populate the area with Germanic tribes) who speak of proto-Slavs and various other more identifiable Slavonic tribal groups as if they were the indigenous peoples of this area.

Since it may be quite impossible to determine who the indigenous peoples really were, it would be advisable to refrain from engaging in wild speculation. A speculative history could only serve the interests of particular

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[12] Norman Davies, Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p.283.
[13] ibid., p.283.

political groups and would not enhance knowledge of the historical process as occurring within these geographic confines.

We do know, at least with a greater degree of certainty, that the 'great Polish plain' was an area of settlement for various peoples, among them the Balts, Celts, Germans, and Slavs. It was also traversed by the nomadic Scythians, Huns, and Mongols. It was an area of great cultural and racial diversity, and it would be irresponsible to ascribe to it anything more than these characteristics - certainly not without more conclusive evidence.

We also know that Charlemagne and his immediate successors started to expand their empire eastward (the origins of the so-called *Drang Nach Osten* or "drive to the east") and that after crushing the Turkic Avars in 804 A.D. the Carlovingians proceeded to push back the Slavonic tribes: the Baltic Slavs, Polabians, Pomeranians, and Sorbs/Lusatians. It was not until the German Kingdom, (*Regnum Teutonicorum*), which had come into existence in 911 A.D., had stopped the *Magyar* or Hun invasions and consolidated its forces that the Lekhitic Slavs, of which the Polanians or 'Poles' were a major sub-group, were threatened by this eastward drive.

Exactly where the Polanians came from is not known and how they came to be organized enough to form a kingdom is equally unclear. Only legends of these events remain. Briefly, the first of two of the most famous of these

"origins" legends is a story about three brothers, Lech, Czech, and Rus, the progenitors of the Poles, Czechs, and Ruthenians, and how they came to live in their respective parts of the world.

The second story, the legend of Piast, is about the peasant boy who, because of his family's great generosity toward two holy strangers, replaced King Popiel as the king of the Polanians (or Lechites as they preferred to call themselves) and became the founder of the first, and only, Polish dynasty - a dynasty with peasant origins!

B. The Piast Kingdom (963 - 1386 A.D.)

Various hypotheses have been proposed stating that the original Piast may not have been a peasant and one hypothesis even has it that *Piast* was the title of a high official in the palace of the king whom he overthrew. [14] Nevertheless, there is some reason to believe that various parts of the legends may be reasonably accurate[15].

There is, however, another significant aspect of the Piast legend - the Polish ethnic origin of the dynasty. This fact, so cherished by Polish romanticists of the Partition period, has acquired a great deal of importance for those

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[14]For a more elaborate explanation of these and some other hypotheses see: Tadeusz Manteuffel, The Formation of the Polish State. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982, p.46,

[15]O. Halecki, A History of Poland. New York: David McKay Company, 1961, p.8.

post-World War II Poles who appear to be preoccupied with fears of German revanchism. "In addition," writes Oskar Halecki, a famous twentieth century Polish historian who published one of the first Polish histories written in English, "the name of Piast has remained the symbol to the Polish people of their purest ethnical traditions, of the continuity of their race on the soil of their fathers, of their national unity from the king to the labourer."[16]

Undeniably, the peasant origins of the Piast dynasty also continue to have a romantic appeal for many Poles, but this notion serves a more subtle purpose in that it has been, and continues to be used to enable the peasants to identify with the Polish nation and state. Stanislaw Wyspianski, the Polish painter and "neo-romantic" playwright and writer was moved by manifestations of this notion to write this in his play *Wesele* (The Wedding)(1901):

> w oczach naszych chlop urasta
> do potegi krola Piasta!
> ....
> A bo chlop i ma cos z Piasta,
> cos z tych krolow Piastow, - wiele!
> ....
> Bardzo wiele, wiele z Piasta;
> chlop potega jest i basta.
> (in our eyes the peasant grows
> to the might of King Piast
> ....
> For the peasant has something from this Piast
> something from the Piast kings, - much!
> ....
> Very much, much from Piast
> the peasant is power and that's enough.) [17]

---

[16] ibid., p.8.

[17] Stanislaw Wyspianski, "Przed Samym Switem: Wyjatki z *Wesela*" In J. Balicki and S. Maykowski (Eds), Mowia Wieki: Podrecznik Do Nauki Jezyka Polskiego Dla IV Klasy Gimnazjalnej. Jerusalem: Urzad Oswiaty i Spraw Szkolnych,

The more cynical elements among the Poles have observed that the upper classes that generated these peasant / Piast comparisons, whether seriously or in satire, were possibly recognizing certain facts about their nation and coming to terms with them. But it was more than likely that such noble sentiments were really designed to be used to dupe more peasants into becoming "cannon-fodder" in a future bid for independence.

The peasants and the Piasts continue to live on in Polish history, more as symbols and parts of slogans than anything else. Interestingly, this history began with a very symbolic gesture - the baptism of the fourth Piast chieftain of the Polanians, and first Christian Duke,[18] Mieszko I. This act which coincided with the beginnings of Polish recorded history, also brought Poland "into the historical consciousness of Christian Europe."[19]

Not only did Christian Europeans become aware of Poland's existence, they very quickly set about determining their relationship to this entity. It is as if the rules of a game had suddenly changed upon Mieszko's acceptance of the

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[17](cont'd) 1943, p.169.

[18]The title of "Duke" is used most often by non-Polish historians while the Polish title of *Ksiaze* or "Prince" is used by the Poles. Eleventh and twelfth century Latin documents, preserved in western European archives, use the title *Dux* when referring to the Piast chieftains. This title has been translated as "Duke". It is worth pointing out that the title of *Rex*, in Latin, or *Krol* (a corrupted form of Karol or *Carolus Magnus* - Charlemagne) does not appear in documents in western or Polish archives until approximately 1320 A.D.. [See: Davies, 1982 , op. cit., pp.61-105.]

[19]Paul W. Knoll, from the Foreward to The Formation of the Polish State. p.16.

Roman Catholic faith; the Piasts and their Polanian host were almost instantly transformed from expendable heathens to legitimate peers in the European power struggle. So-much-so that the marriagability of the Piasts was immediately seen to be acceptable by the ruling houses of Europe. Mieszko married Dubrawka, a Czech princess three years before accepting Catholic baptism, and his descendants could "aspire" to imperial consorts."[20] Some of his descendants in other European lands acheived degrees of "greatness" or fame which Mieszko himself could never have foreseen; Canute (994? -1035), King of Denmark, England and Norway was Mieszko's grandson!

Indeed, the Piasts entered upon the scene with considerable audacity in that they allied themselves with the Czechs (accepting Christianity from them) while at the same time acknowledging the suzerainty of the German Emperor. They also sought the protection of the Papacy when they wished to legitimate the successful expansion of their area of influence at the expense of their Czech 'brothers' as well as that of the Slavonic tribes inhabiting the lands between Mieszko's Poland and the eastern *marks* of the German Empire. What had emerged in history as a fiefdom held by a Slavonic "duke", the vassal of a German Emperor, was soon transformed into a "European power."

Mieszko's son, Boleslaw Chrobry (the Brave), was crowned king by the Emperor himself in return for his

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[20]Davies, 1982, op.cit., pp.72-74.

fealty, but this title appears not to have been hereditary. Some of Mieszko's descendants took this title, even crowning themselves when the opportunities presented themselves, but most acknowledged the suzerainty of the German Emperor. It was not until 1320 A.D. after the reunification of Polish lands (divided by Mieszko's successors) that a definitive attitude of independence and absolute sovereignty replaced the fluctuating relationships with the Empire.

Wladyslaw I, Lokietek (Ladislas, the Elbow-high)(c.1260 1333) was crowned, King of Poland, with Papal permission. His son, Kazimierz III, Wielki (Casimir III, the Great) (1310 - 1370) secured Poland's position relative to its powerful neighbours through skillful negotiation as much as through warfare and thereby firmly entrenched the legacy of a Piast Polish Kingdom. Ironically, these most powerful of the Piasts were also the last of the direct descendants of Mieszko, and among the last of the regal Piasts.

The denouement of the Piasts may also have been the period of origin of many of the social evils which plague Poland right up to the present day. Foremost among these was the heirarchic order or system effected through inclusion of new notions about the socially exclusive status of the knights, and regulations concerning serfs, into the then urgently required codification of laws. Kazimierz III, the champion of the downtrodden Polish elements of the Kingdom, and often referred to as "the King of the Peasants"[21] may

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[21]Roman Dyboski, Outlines of Polish History. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1925, p.49.

have been responsible for the creation of a very rigid class system unknown in the rest of Europe and comparable only to the Japanese social structure in which a preponderant 'warrior class' also existed.

It is often stated that Kazimierz "found a Poland built of wood,..,and left it built of stone."[22] In other words, he encouraged the Poles to build up their cities with cathedrals, churches, and even a University for Krakow (1364), but oddly enough he insisted on the German style.

Even in the agrarian sector the desired development was characteristically Germanic (not exclusively German, but Flemish and Dutch also). *Hollanders*[23] were encouraged to settle in Poland, and even to oversee the organization and expansion of agriculture.

Quite possibly, peasant serfdom in Poland differed very little from that in other contemporary western European countries, but as the peasant and "knightly" classes became more Polonized and, coincidentally more conscious of their social differences (a process which, if we are to accept the versions presented by the majority of sources, began during the last years of the Piast dynasty), the nature of serfdom changed so radically that the Polish - Lithuanian Commonwealth came to be known as "Hell for the peasants."[24] The position of the indigenous Polish peasant in the time of Kazimierz the Great was not affected if we are to believe

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[22]Davies, 1986, op.cit., p.286.
[23]The Polish name for foreign or free peasants.[See: Dyboski, op.cit.; p.33.]
[24]Davies, 1982, op.cit.,.p.206

the observations of William Coxe, an 18th century English traveller and scholar.

> The peasants in Poland, as in all feudal governments, are serfs or slaves; and the value of an estate is not estimated so much from its extent, as from the number of its peasants, who are transferred from one master to another like so many head of cattle.
>
> The peasants, however, are not all in an equal state of subjection: they are distinguished into two sorts; 1.German; 2. Natives. ...[The Germans have] privileges not possessed by the generality of Polish peasants....
>
> The slavery of the Polish peasants is very ancient, and was always extremely rigorous. Until the time of Casimir the Great, the lord could put his peasant to death with impunity.... In 1347 Casimir prescribed a fine for the murder of a peasant.... The same sovereign also decreed, that a peasant was capable of bearing arms as a soldier, and that therefore he ought to be considered as a freeman. But these and other regulations, by which that amiable monarch endeavoured to alleviate the miseries of the vassals, have proved ineffectual against the power and tyranny of the nobles, and have been either abrogated or eluded. [25]

A different, but rather more conventional, view of the situation of the peasants in Piast Poland is expressed by Roman Dyboski in the following paragraphs:

> It was by degrees only, and in the shape of customary law, that peasant serfdom grew up to be an established institution in medieval Poland, as in the other European countries of that time. ...[V]illagers [paid rent] to the landlord of the neighbourhood. ...[O]ne class of peasants, the actual serfs, had the obligation to till his land for a fixed number of days per week in return for owning their land from him.... Nor were the landlord's powers over the serf tyrannous and unlimited in the early time;... A large portion of the peasants are entirely free in person, and the tenure of their land, in return for ground rent and labour, is fixed and not subject to arbitrary change. Neither are the peasants under the control of the administrative officials of the state.

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[25]William Coxe, Travels Into Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark. London: Cadell, In the Strand, 1785, pp.113-114.

> ...[T]hey have their own courts of law; the landlord sits as chairman in grave criminal cases only,... Agriculture is still in its infancy, and hunting and cattle-breeding are more important occupations.[26]

It may be said therefore that the conditions of peasant existence in the Kingdom of Kazimierz the Great probably were dependent upon the ethnic origin of the peasants. The Polish peasants were probably serfs while the peasant immigrants were free men. This situation, no doubt, changed in time as the peasants' legal position deteriorated.

As with agriculture the development of commerce and manufacturing, being mainly city or town oriented activities, proceeded on the German model. The cities of Krakow and Breslau (Wroclaw, in Polish) were part of the German commercial network known as the *Hansa* or Hanseatic League. German immigrants , some "indigenous" Poles and Jews whose presence in Poland may even go back to the period of pre-history with the settlement of the Asiatic Khazars, who were of the Judaic faith[27] took part in the economic "boom" created in the wake of Kazimierz's policy of building up the country and standardizing laws and currency. Towards the end of Kazimierz's reign the Armenians came into Poland and became a most welcome addition[28] to an increasingly

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[26]Dyboski, op.cit., pp.34-35.
[27]Davies, 1982, op.cit., pp.79-80.
[28]The Armenians, who survive as a distinct ethnic minority up to the present day, were wealthy, astute businessmen, and also respected warriors who, while being Eastern Christians, they felt themselves to be independent of the influence of the fledgling Moscovite state and of the deteriorating Byzantine Empire. These qualities made them preferred immigrants.

ethnically variegated commercial or "burgher" class. Unfortunately, after the extinction of the Piast dynasty, the development of this class was retarded. The role of the "warrior" caste increased in importance in an expansion oriented "Commonwealth". The Armenians, like the Jews, escaped the intense Polonizing pressures applied by the Piasts in their effort to build a lasting kingdom which would be homogeneous in both ethnicity and religion. It has therefore been suggested that Kazimierz III,the last of the Piasts, sought to build a "replica in miniature of those grander kingdoms of the West...."[29] Curiously, this attitude of the Poles toward Western culture has henceforward, (except for a short "chauvinistic" episode during the peak years of the Polish - Lithuanian Commonwealth), affected the shape of Polish cultural expression. Polish art, for example, is "western" in its style and philosophy evn today.

The Poland of the Piasts probably did become a kingdom comparable to any in Western Europe, but the need for security on the western, and to some extent the eastern and southern frontiers, coupled with 'dreams of empire', carried the Poles into a peculiar union with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

After the death of Kazimierz III, Ludwik I (Louis of Anjou) an indirect descendant of the Piasts, ruled Poland from 1370 to 1382. His second oldest daughter, Jadwiga (Hedwig), who was actually the last of the Piast line to

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[29]Davies, 1982, ibid., p.104.

rule in Poland, succeeded him. Her marriage to Wladyslaw Jagiello (Jogaila, in Lithuanian) the Grand Duke of Lithuania marked the beginning of the Jagiellonian dynastic line - the duration of which could be considered as the first period in the Era of Amalgamation or the Multicultural Era.

C. Amalgamation, and the Multicultural Era

This phase of Polish history is in reality not the record of the development of a single nation, though it has often been made to appear that way. Historians very seldom view this as a period of amalgamation . It is as if the existence and aspirations of the ethnic Lithuanian, Prussian, German, Byelorussian, and Ruthenian elements, as well as those of the Jews, Armenians, Karaites, and Tatars, (who had no specific regional identity) were somehow eclipsed throughout the time of their co-habitation in the realm of the Jagiellons and its successor republics even through the period of Partitions and on into the twentieth century.

It is quite possible that early Polish historians, being themselves citizens of a multi-ethnic or multicultural state were unable to recognize the various dynamics of their state. They wrote from their perspective as "Poles" as citizens of the Polish - Lithuanian state[30]; and in this way

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[30]This is analogous to the 'British' perspective of many

they managed to determine a particular historiographical approach which has often been uncritically accepted by later historians.

Modern historians have the advantage of knowing about the peculiar dynamics of the multicultural state. Admittedly, this phenomenon is still not very well understood but certain social and political tendencies have been identified; the processes of assimilation and acculturation; the need, and subsequent search, for an "identity"; and, the political struggle for cultural as well as economic security. It is puzzling therefore, that some historians are so hesitant to accept such an historical paradigm. However, there are indications that historians are beginning to appreciate the importance of this perspective. Norman Davies has recently made a few observations about Poland's "multicultural heritage".

> To the objective observer, the most outstanding feature of pre-Partition society in Poland-Lithuania was its multicultural heritage. Within the confines of the old Republic, there flourished a profusion of peoples, a riot of religions, a luxuriance of languages.... People prided themselves in their descent, real or imagined.... The official languages of Polish and Latin in the Kingdom were matched by *ruski* and Polish in the Grand Duchy. Vernacular speech was conducted in anything from the four main regional dialects of Polish, plus Kashub and *goralski*, (the highland brogue) to Ruthenian in its northern (Byelorussian) or southern (Ukrainian) forms; Lithuanian, Latvian, and (to 1600) Prussian; *platdeutsch* in the northern cities, Yiddish, Tartar, or Armenian....
>
> The cultural variety of old Polish society encouraged a number of specific attitudes. It prepared the ground, if not for universal tolerance, then at least for practical toleration. It promoted

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[30](cont'd) English, Scottish, or Welsh writers

> an environment of cultural 'cross-fertilization', where open-minded people could learn from their neighbours; and it encouraged a strong tradition of education, where each of the communities had to emulate the others in the excellence of their schools and academies. In the period after the Partitions, when each of the peoples developed their own exclusive national movements, it fostered a deplorable degree of animosity; but it also convinced the opponents of Nationalism that the cultures of eastern Europe must either learn to cooperate or perish....
>
> It would be idle to suppose that Poland's multinational heritage has produced anything approaching unruffled fraternal harmony.... Yet it must be realized in the midst of all the disputes that may people did strive to preserve the ideals of intercommunal harmony and of a multicultural society.... Not surprisingly, in searching their history for a suitable model, they hit on the Poland of the Jagiellons, when their multinational ideals were first supposed to have taken root....
>
> Many of the key documents of the Jagiellonian era, from the magnificent preamble to the Act of Horodlo in 1413 to the moving testament of Sigismund-August in 1572, talk of the 'love, harmony, and unity' of the different communities of the realm. These words were not mere slogans,...
>
> ...[The multicultural concept] foundered on the reefs of the artificial segregation of the peoples of the area after the Second World War.[31]

Obviously, the multicultural era or 'epoch' in "Polish" history spans a great period of time (five hundred and fifty-three years), and because of this an examination of its major segments is essential. It is possible to divide up the period in this fashion: first, the Jagiellonian period (1386 - 1569), during which Poland and Lithuania were separate, but very closely allied, entities; second, the post-Jagiellonian and subsequent period of Elective Monarchy (the rise and decline of the 'Nation of Nobles') (1569 - 1772); third, the Partitions (1772 - 1918); and finally,

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[31]Davies, 1986, op.cit., pp.316-323

Independent (Inter-war) Poland(1918 - 1939).

The Jagiellonian Period (1386 - 1569)

The realm of the Jagiellons was in reality not one state, but an 'alliance' of two - the Kingdom of Poland, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Only over time did the two become a single entity. It is reasonable to assume that despite the personal union acheived through Wladyslaw Jagiello's marriage to the very young (11 - 13 years of age) and reticent Jadwiga, for some thirty years there existed only a military alliance against the growing power of the Prussian state of the Teutonic Knights.[32]

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[32] The Order of the Hospital of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the German House of Jerusalem', (whom the Poles called *Krzyzacy* or "cross-bearers" because of the black crosses which members of the order had on their mantles), was invited in 1226, by the Piast Duke Konrad of Mazowia to pacify and Christianize his hostile Prussian neighbours. Very quickly, the power of the Order grew so that toward the last days of the Piast dynasty (mid to late 14th century) the Teutonic Knights were challenging the Kingdom of Poland itself.

The Order's incursions into Lithuania and Russia (where they were first repelled by Alexander Nevsky in the 13th century) were becoming increasingly succesful as well, so it isn't surprising that some sort of alliance of the three threatened states against this menace was attempted.

Lithuania, being the only pagan state, had to accept Christianity as a condition of alliance with either Poland or Russia and this posed something of a personal dilemma for Jagiello who, while recognising that Poland was the stronger state politically and militarily, was neither enamoured of the Poles nor of their "German God". [See: Davies, 1982, ibid., pp.116-118.]

Making the more expedient choice (because it carried with it a guarantee of security of Lithuania's western boundaries) he opted for alliance, and possibly union, with Poland. The Polish barons and nobility, for their part, elected Jagiello as king (rejecting Jadwiga's betrothed, Wilhelm von Habsburg, Prince of Austria!) at an assembly in

The Act of Horodlo, 1413, was the first effort to bridge the gap between the two states. It was decreed that Lithuania would adopt a Polish administrative system , and the Poles, in their turn, would grant patents of nobility to the Lithuanian and Ruthenian boyars. The two countries were still kept apart but the equality in status of the members of their 'warrior classes' was recognised. In addition, the Act granted the "Polish lords" the right to have a say in the election of future Lithuanian Grand Dukes, in other

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[32](cont'd) Lublin in 1386. Jagiello never forgot his debt to the Polish 'lords' for this fateful act of theirs!

The military power which resulted from this union (along with aid from Russian and Tatar allies) inflicted a major defeat upon the Teutonic Knights in the historic battle of Grunwald in 1410. The power of the Order was further curbed as a result of several smaller battles over the following fifty-odd years. The Order, however, continued to exist.

The lands of the Order were partitioned into Royal Prussia, which was to remain as as an autonomous part of the Polish Kingdom, and East Prussia, to be left under the control of the Order, but as a fief of the Polish state. This, presumably, should have eliminated the threat to both Poland and Lithuania, instead, it preserved the entity so that upon secularization of the Order in 1525 the last Grand Master, Jagiello's great-grandson, Albrecht (of Brandenburg) von Hohenzollern-Ansbach came to hold the lands as a secular fiefdom of the Polish Crown. The Hohenzollerns, in their turn, came to be the kings, and later emperors, of Prussia - one of the partitioning powers of Poland-Lithuania. Indeed, Frederick the Great used the 15th century partitioning of Prussia as his pretext for the partitions of Poland-Lithuania in the eighteenth century.

An equally preposterous event occurred when the Prussian propaganda machine claimed, in 1914, that the German victory at Tannenberg (near Grunwald) avenged the defeat inflicted upon the Teutonic Order at that site some 500 years before! Again, in 1939, Hitler's Nazis "liberated" the standards and banners of the Order from their 'Polish imprisonment' in Wawel Castle in Krakow!

In retrospect it may be said that, many of the seemingly sucoesful military ventures of the union of Poland and Lithuania, against the Teutonic Knights, proved not to be very fortuitous.

words, the right to interfere in the internal affairs of Lithuania.

This marked Jagiello's first major concession to the Polish nobility. He and his successors continued to grant, to the now expanded Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian *Szlachta* (Nobility), additional concessions which included some that became the legal bases of the post-Jagiellonian 'Nation of Nobles'. Two important examples of such laws *Neminem captivabimus nisi iure victum* (no one may be imprisoned without sentence of law) (1430), and *Nihil Novi* (Nothing New [without the approval of the nobility]) (1505), reflect the power of this "new Estate".

This is how the *Szlachta* "enters upon the period of its oppressive preponderance over the less favoured classes." [33] It should be explained that the Jagiellons deprived the Burghers of many of the rights and privileges which they enjoyed under the last Piast Kings. This attack on their position caused them to become an estate subordinate to that of the *Szlachta*, but still in some ways more free than the peasants who were increasingly pressured into serfdom and slavery.

It is essential, at this point, to discuss the social heirarchy which emerged in the 15th and 16th centuries in Poland-Lithuania and continued to exist there, albeit in altered form, until the middle of the twentieth century. The remains of this 'Old Order' are still evident today, mainly

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[33] Dyboski, op.cit., p.72.

in the Emigre populations which left rather than attempting to adapt to many of the more dynamic aspects of the post-Partition 'New Social Order'.

THE OLD SOCIAL HEIRARCHY

Foremost among all other Polish-Lithuanian social groups was the "Noble Estate" or *Szlachta*. This group, which is often erroneously referred to as the "gentry", was the collective estate of all of the nobility, 'magnates, landowning gentry, and peasant nobility. It "combine[d] the senses of 'high birth' and 'military prowess' which together constitute the original ingredients of medieval nobility."[34]

A particularly interesting feature of this 'nobility' is that its members were not all in positions of power or means. The strata of the *Szlachta*, if arranged in order of decreasing wealth and means, has at the top the extremely wealthy Magnates; the "Great Nobility" (made up of 'old' families and the propertied nobility) or *Szlachta Zamozna* and *Szlachta Czastkowa*; descends to the "Middle Nobility" or *Szlachta Czynszowa* and *Zagrodowa*; continues downward to the "Peasant Nobility" or *Szlachta Zasciankowa* (behind the wall), *Szlachta Zagonowa* (garden bed-nobility), and *Szlachta Szaraczkowa* (Gray nobility); and finally reaches the two lowest sub groups, *Holota* (rabble) and *Szlachta Brukowa* (street or town nobility), both of which are landless and

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[34]Davies, 1982, op.cit., pp. 207-208.

serf-less.[35]

Members of all of these stata considered each other to be "brother" nobles, and enjoyed recourse to the same laws, courts, and other institutions. They all had the power of *Liberum veto* or the right to prevent enactment of any legislation which they did not approve of, and they all could cast ballots in the election of a monarch. This "democracy of the Nobles" was quite remarkable and unique in European history. It also was the source of much confusion and a great deal of derision and prejudice on the part of the upper classes of other European countries.

Particularly confusing was the notion of "Peasant Nobility". This concept was unknown elsewhere in the world, but was none-the-less quite comprehensible to the Poles. The "Peasant Nobles" were considered to be part of the "warrior class" whose virtues were supposed to transcend such mundane considerations as ownership of land, serfs, and possession of other wealth. The members of this group were, after all, descendants of 14th and 15th century warriors (mostly Lithuanians) who had received land in return for military service. The comparatively small size of these landholdings was mainly due to successive divisions owing to a natural increase in the numbers of this *Szlachta* over time. The fact that the conditions of existence of the members of this group were almost indistinguishable from those of free

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[35] [See: Davies, 1982, ibid., pp.201-225., and W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, The Polish Peasant in Europe and America. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927, pp. 128-130.]

peasants, and even serfs, did not affect their claim to any "rights by birth". Their social status was, therefore, determined by the "hereditary principle" (*Rodowitosc*) rather than by material considerations.

On the other hand, material considerations determined the survival of individual members of the "Peasant Nobility". Some were driven into abject poverty and even serfdom, while others became servants of wealthier Nobles and Magnates. Most, however, remained on the land and practiced the Eastern European forms of subsistence agriculture to which they were accustomed.

In summary, a Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian social heirarchy was formed by political, social, and economic forces unleashed or experienced mainly as a result of the union of Poland and Lithuania. The 'Noble Estate' was brought into existence, and through this the society attained a remarkable degree of "nationalist" cohesion. "It is an interesting reflection on society that heraldry rather than kingship became its cement."[36] The hereditary monarchy was eventually replaced by a democracy of the Nobles, and the other 'estates' were pushed into subservience.

It was at this point in time that Poland changed its cultural orientation from Western to Eastern and its rhythm of development. At first similar to Western Europe's this

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[36]V. L. Benes and N. G. J. Pounds, Poland. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1970, p.45.

development showed ever widening disparities.[37] Essentially two castes, the *Szlachta* and the Peasants, became the dynamic elements of the social system.

With time, the numbers of the *Szlachta* decreased, while those of the peasants increased disproportionately. The 'Peasant Estate' became the refuge, or final rung in the descent of the social ladder for many. This supposedly ahistoric element actually was a variegated social group which apparently became aware of its size and potential power only during the time of Partitions. The post-Jagiellonian "Golden Age" of the 'Nation of Nobles' was, however, not the most auspicious time in the history of the Peasants.

The "Nation of Nobles" (1569 - 1772)

The separation of Poland from Lithuania was ended by the Union of Lublin, 1569, whereby the Ukraine was incorporated into the lands of the Polish Kingdom and Poland and Lithuania were joined into one republic. Zygmunt August, the last Jagiellonian King, presided over this union which was his lifelong project. Three years later, and after his death, the *Rzeczpospolita* or 'Commonwealth' itself came into existence.

From that point in time until the Constitution of 1791 the Nobles elected the Kings of the Commonwealth. Some of

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[37] Czeslaw Milosz, Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968, p.14.

these monarchs were strong leaders while others proved to be incredibly weak and pliable, even timid. Some could rally the Nobles; others were allies of the Nobles; still others were mere puppets of the electorate. The greatest of the leaders were Stefan Batory (1575 -1586), a Hungarian; Zygmunt III, Vasa, (1587 - 1632), also King of Sweden; and Jan Sobieski (1674 - 1696), who lifted the siege of Vienna in 1683. The weakest of the kings, such as Henri of Valois (1573), were terrified of the *Szlachta* and undoubtedly were responsible for the steady progress of the 'Nation of Nobles' into an anarchic form of democracy.

Despite the usual intransigence of the Nobles the Commonwealth managed to extend its territorial boundaries at the expense of the Russians and Tatars during the first seventy to eighty years of its existence. Its wealth was also tremendously increased because of the flourishing grain trade, although only the Nobles profited from this. This combined wealth and prestige gave impetus to a wave of cultural and intellectual expression never before experienced. There is no doubt that this truly was the "Golden Age of Polish Culture" - when the Polish 'factor' achieved a kind of cultural hegemony in the territories of the Commonwealth. Julian Krzyzanowski writes that:

> This process, which lasted a century, went through various phases, depending on what was happening in the nation....
>
> The initial phase, that of imbuing Polish culture with elements of Renaissance humanism, lasted from 1506,.. to the year 1543...; this year witnessed the death of Copernicus and Janicius and also brought the publication [for the first time ,

> in Polish] of several excellent works by Mikolaj Rej, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, Stanislaw Orzechowski and others. This phase brought the flourishing development of printing in Cracow and a simultaneous abundant flowering of literature of burgher origin.... [It] grew out of the clash of the obsolete phenomena of the Middle Ages with the innovatory trends of the Renaissance....
>
> The second phase... lasted until the year 1584.... These years, which witnessed energetic action by the movement for the execution of law, brought new writers, mostly of gentry origin, into Polish literature and their writings describe all the basic components of Polish humanism.
>
> The last phase takes us up to the year 1620.... This was a phase of decline, bringing the eventide of the Renaissance and a gradual transition to the Baroque; new political and cultural relations marked by the Turkish war and the Counter-Reformation introduced new subjects into Polish literature....[38]

In the middle of the 17th century the Commonwealth's "problems began to multiply"; and "[the] quiet decadence of Poland was then rudely interrupted."[39] First, in 1648 the Cossacks of the Ukraine under the leadership of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky (Bogdan Chmielnicki in Polish) revolted against the Polish Magnates whose overlordship had been imposed on them as a result of the Union of Lublin. The late Ivan L. Rudnytsky, in evaluating the causes and effects of this revolt, emphasized that:

> The great Cossack Revolution of 1648.., was a pivotal moment in the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations. All strata of the Ukrainian population, excepting the magnates and their retainers, participated in the uprising, an indication of how deep was the resentment against the Polish regime in Ukraine. The revolution amounted to the Ukrainian people's repudiation of the Lublin settlement.... Their original objectives focused on redress of Cossack and Orthodox grievances, and on winning for

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[38] Julian Krzyzanowski, A History of Polish Literature. Warszawa: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1978, pp.35-36.
[39] Benes and Pounds, op.cit., p.55.

> Ukraine some form of limited autonomy. But no compromise solution was possible, because the magnates would not acquiesce to the loss of their latifundia, seized by insurgent Cossacks and peasants. From about 1650 on, Khmelnytsky's policy aimed at a complete break with Poland.... Thus Khmelnytsky was obliged to seek foreign support, first from Turkey, and afterwards from Muscovy. By the memorable Treaty of Pereiaslav, 1654, Ukraine accepted the protectorate of the Russian Tsar. Hegemony in Eastern Europe shifted to the Tsardom of Moscow, soon to be transformed into the Russian Empire, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lost forever its stature as a great power.[40]

After the signing of the treaty with Khmelnytsky the Russians invaded the Commonwealth. The Swedes, under Charles X, also invaded and succeeded in occupying much of the country. For a time it looked as if the state was experiencing a "deluge" of catastrophes. Indeed, this period is often referred to as the "Deluge" (*Potop*). And, it was only through remarkable efforts if not actual miracles[41] that the invaders were fended off.

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[40]Ivan L. Rudnytsky, "Polish-Ukrainian Relations: The Burden of History" In Peter J. Potichnyj (Ed.) Poland and Ukraine Past and Present. Edmonton: The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1980, pp.10-11.

[41]The Black Madonna of Czestochowa is credited with the 'miraculous' lifting of the Swedish seige of Jasna Gora, the monastery where the famous icon is housed. As a result of the succesful efforts to fend off the invaders, the King, Jan Kazimierz, proclaimed that the Blessed Virgin Mary should be venerated as the 'Queen of the Crown of Poland'.[See: Halecki, op.cit., p.159.]

The Polish cult of the Virgin Mary dating back to the 17th century has created many public expressions of devotion at various times since then. Jozef Pilsudski, the 'Father of Independent Poland' always carried a picture of the Virgin Mary of Ostra Brama (Wilno),(the Grand Duchess of Lithuania and Defender of Poland's eastern borders). Lech Walesa, possibly in imitation of Pilsudski, never appears in public without a picture of the Black Madonna pinned to his lapel. Pope John Paul II, a Pole, also has encouraged Catholics to particular devotion of the Virgin Mary.

Internal problems with the *Szlachta* persisted. The power of *Liberum Veto* was first invoked in 1652. For the next 120 years no legislation of any consequence was passed in the *Sejm* or Diet. The *Szlachta* made sure that they lived up to the dictum, *Nierzadem stoi Polska!* (Poland stands unruled!).

Not surprisingly, the Commonwealth's neighbouring states became increasingly interested in Polish internal affairs. The Russians, with strong memories of the Polish pretenders to the Muscovite throne and Hetman Zolkiewski's invasion of of their country, were the keenest meddlers. It should also be pointed out that some of the Polish Magnates and lesser *Szlachta* were more willing to turn to the Russians for aid and 'advice' than to the Swedes or Germans. This encouraged the Russians.

In some ways, this tendency on the part of the Polish Nobles was the result of the Great Northern War which ended with the defeat of the armies of Charles XII at Poltava (1709). The Swedish monarch was responsible for the "coronation" of Stanislaw Leszczynski as King of the Commonwealth and for forcing the elected King, August of Saxony, to renounce his claim to the Polish throne. Waging war primarily on the territories of the Commonwealth, Charles XII attempted to impose a new 'balance of power' in Easterr Europe. When he was defeated by Peter the Great of Russia, all of this was undone and Russia reasserted, and even expanded its hegemony in the region.

August of Saxony was returned as King to a Commonwealth which was becoming increasingly demoralized and politically isolated. Upon his death, two elections took place; one considered to be free and legal; and the other, "under the protection of Russian guns". The result was the War of the Polish Succession with its resolution in the Peace of Vienna, 1735. August III, the Saxon candidate supported by the Russians became King while Stanislaw Leszczynski, the Polish-French candidate, retreated to the Duchy of Lorraine.

This new King was not the least bit interested in Polish affairs - internal or external. "[The] apathy of the King, the most unworthy sovereign that Poland ever had, seemed as though it had taken possession of the whole nation."[42] The Commonwealth seemed to lose direction and impetus; it had no foreign policy, and internal 'democratic anarchy' prevailed.

On the other hand, there were those Nobles who saw a need for national reform. With the exiled Stanislaw Leszczynski as their mentor, they undertook active work in several areas including the reform of the educational 'system'.[43]

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[42]Halecki, op.cit., p.186.

[43]This is the first 'modern' example of the influencing of internal affairs and especially of cultural/political trends by some emigre group. This 'tradition' would carry on through the Partition era, right up to the present day. Scholars have not yet determined the real significance of this "Diasporic" influence, but it appears to be an increasingly powerful historico-socio-political force (certainly worthy of study).

Stanislaw Konarski, a Piarist priest, established the *Collegium Nobilium*, a model public school for young Nobles, in 1740, and reformed the schools of the Piarist Order.

The magnitude of this, his most conscientious effort after his political treatises,[44] has, however, often been exaggerated. If observed in their proper context, the Piarist schools were a much smaller network than that maintained by the Jesuit Order. However, they did not reform their school system, which numbered some "51 colleges attended by 20,000 young gentry"[45] The education of the vast majority of *Szlachta* youth was conducted by private tutors many of whom were totally unqualified for these positions. Very often their *rodowitosc* and loyalty were the only criteria for their employment.

So, with its social structure beginning to undergo devolution, the country continued to stagnate and decline politically, economically, and culturally. Under pressure from Frederick II of Prussia and Catharine the Great of Russia, in 1764 a *Sejm* of Nobles elected Stanislaw August Poniatowski, a "Pole", member of the very powerful Czartoryski Family, and Catharine's former lover, to the

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[44]William J. Rose, a Canadian scholar, whose doctoral dissertation (1926) dealt with the work of Stanislaw Konarski, tends to give credence to the notion that Konarski's multi-volume political study On Effective Government had the effect of influencing "Polish politics throughout the partition era." [See: Daniel Stone (Ed.): The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975. pp.xix]
[See also: William J. Rose, Stanislaw Konarski London: Jonathan Cape, 1929.]

[45]Stanislaw Arnold and Marian Zychowski, Outline History of Poland. Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1965, p.63.

throne. As usually seemed to be the case, the *Szlachta* was divided on the issue of his acceptance but acquiesced when Russian troops marched toward Warsaw.

The degree of Russian influence in the affairs of the Commonwealth was so great now, that Repnin, Catharine's ambassador, could dictate to the *Szlachta* and their government with impunity. But the Commonwealth was allowed to remain intact and to retain its sovereignty for a time.

The Partitions (1772 - 1918)

The first partition of Poland, in 1772, shook the nation to its foundations and forced the *Szlachta* to come to the realization that the concept of a "noble nation" and the right to exercise the *Liberum Veto* had to be given up. The ineffectiveness of this seemingly democratic system of government had become apparent even before the formation of the anti-Russian Confederation of Bar (1768 - 1772) but the violence of the Confederates' efforts to preserve Polish independence through restructuring the system of government (including an attempt to assasinate the elected king), succeeded in making the impression more than just an intuitive one.

All of their efforts were to no avail because they failed to rally a great number of the *Szlachta* to their cause. Tragically, the Confederates were crushed by the

Russians as the Polish nation wallowed in indecision.[46] In fact , "Prussia , Russia and Austria... seized one third of Poland's territory and justified this act by [citing] the anarchy prevailing in the country..." during this period of warfare among the *Szlachta*.[47]

Ironically , the previously indecisive Diet or *Sejm* was able to come to a decision on the nature of a reaction to the partition of the Polish - Lithuanian Commonwealth's territories by its three hostile neighbouring powers . Expressing fear of further losses of territory the *Sejm* ratified this first " Partition "!

Russia acquired the largest share - all of the lands beyond the Dvina and Dnieper rivers ; Austria also received a large area with an even larger population than the Russian acquisition; "but it was Frederick the Great [the descendant of Hohenzollern vassals of Polish Kings] who secured the most valuable [territory].., obtaining West Prussia which had separated East Prussia from the rest of his possessions. And if he was obliged to renounce provisionally the towns of Danzig and Torun, he took in return the north of Great Poland."[48]

The realization that they and their state were in serious trouble came as a sobering shock to the *Szlachta*.

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[46]Casimir Pulaski, one of the leaders of the Confederation of Bar, became a famous general in the American Revolutionary Army. Tadeusz Kosciuszko, the leader of the final bid to preserve Poland-Lithuania from being partitioned, was also a general in the same American army.
[47]Julian Krzyzanowski, op.cit. , p.165.
[48]Halecki, op.cit., p.196.

They were then gripped by an agonizing frustration brought on by the awareness of this mortal danger and of their government's inability to act. It became apparent to them that the system had to undergo reform or the nation would perish. The Russians and their Prussian "allies", however, fearing any possible attempt at reform within the Polish state, attempted to impose an internal administration of their own design on Poland .[49] This device failed to achieve its purpose and Stanislaw August and his Permanent Council, brought Poland into a "Period of Revival" within the context of the social reforms experienced throughout Western Europe in the "Age of Enlightenment".[50]

In keeping with the "spirit of the Enlightenment," the King and his closest advisors established as their political program the "rebirth" and "flourishing development" of culture including education, art, literature, and philosophy. [51] This undertaking was not too realistic or even politically astute, but it was, in a sense, explicable given the revolutionary nature of Enlightenment thought and the intensity of the Polish social and political crisis against which it was juxtaposed. The need for reform was obvious and the new philosophies promised "salvation" (as if their acceptance or implementation would serve as a form of "expiation" for past errors or "sins") through the restructuring of the nation.

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[49] ibid., p.197.
[50] Krzyzanowski, op.cit., pp.167-219.
[51] ibid..

It is not surprising, therefore, that the reformers turned to certain Enlightenment thinkers for advice, specifically on the Polish situation. Foremost among those whose advice was actively solicited was Jean Jacques Rousseau, who "was regarded almost as an infallible idol, as the revealer of new truths...."[52]

Despite the fact that he "only had a very general knowledge of Poland, [he] did not hesitate to outline the desired reforms."[53]. In his proposals for the reorganization of the Polish government he stated that education was the key to fostering 'good' or 'constructive' nationalism in Polish youth. In fact, he emphasized the importance of 'education for nationalism', for as he saw it, a person had to be more than a loyal citizen. He had to be a citizen with his "whole heart."[54] He also stated emphatically that :

> It is education which ought to give people the national mold, and direct their opinions and their tastes in such a way that they are patriots by inclination, by passion, by necessity."[55]

Apparently , Rousseau's 'noble' and very idealistic statements appealed to the Polish reformers and in 1773, after considerable discussion and additional advice from other great thinkers, the Commission for National Education, possibly the first ministry of education in Europe,[56] was

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[52] ibid., p.173.
[53] ibid., p.173
[54] Jean Jacques Rousseau, "The Government of Poland" , originally published in 1771 , reprinted in Kingsley Price, Education and Philosophical Thought. Boston:Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1962, pp.347-350.
[55] ibid., pp.347-348.
[56] Zdislaw J.Peszkowski, Polonia Semper Fidelis:"Poland's Holy MIllenium" Orchard Lake: SS.Cyril and Methodius

established. Oscar Halecki describes this very remarkable development in this way:

> ...[The]lamentable Diet which had been forced to sanction the first partition created in the course of its labours, in 1773, an extremely valuable institution, the celebrated Commission of National Education. The Jesuit Order having been dissolved by Clement XIV, Poland assigned the funds that had thus become at her disposal to the foundation and functioning of this new organization, which has been justly compared to a ministry of public instruction, the first in Europe. The whole of Polish education, from the primary school to the Universities of Cracow and Wilno, was reorganized by this commission with as much competence as moderation and good method.[57]

Undoubtedly, the effectiveness of this commission was the result not only of the very diligent and competent work of its members, but was also due to their status in Polish society. It must also be conceded that the fractious disposition of the *Szlachta* was being ameliorated by their recognition of a need for reform.

In other words, some members of this "estate" were willing to cooperate with the reformers - especially with those who came from powerful families such as, Adam Czartoryski, Ignacy Potocki, and Andrew Zamoyski. Others were simply caught up in the fervor of the writings and speeches of very gifted individuals like Hugo Kollataj[58], Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, and Gregory Piramowicz , the Commission's secretary. All but a few recalcitrant or

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[56](cont'd) Seminary, 1985.
[57]Halecki, op.cit., pp.197-198.
[58]In "peasant humour or irony" (barring a better description of this phenomenon) anyone who is seen to be a somewhat misguided orator, or full of self-importance, may be described as a "Hugo Kollataj."

reactionary magnates and those who would do their bidding, were willing to allow the Commission to carry on with its work of reforming the educational system.

The Universities of Krakow and Wilno were reformed and "emancipated from clerical control and given the financial backing of the state."[59] In fact, the general tendency or mood of the Commission was one of secularization - i.e. removing clerical control over schools and institutions of higher learning and shifting the curricular emphasis from theological studies toward the more 'exact sciences.' Some of the *Szlachta* balked at this and at also at attempts to physically upgrade or modernize buildings or classrooms, but they did not make serious attempts to impede the Commission's efforts.

There is no doubt that certain aspects of the Commission's work were quite controversial. None was so bold as the voicing of the opinion, held by atleast two of its members that education was not just the right of the *Szlachta* and most recently, of the *Mieszczanie*(Burghers), but also of the other 'citizens' - the *Chlopi* or peasants (serfs).

Ignacy Massalski, Bishop of Wilno, "the most radical theorist of the Commissioners, not only drew up regulations for "parish" schools (elementary schools for the peasants), but began to establish a large number of such schools....The

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[59]Stanislaw Kot, Five Centuries of Polish Learning:Three Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford, May, 1941. Oxford: The Shakespeare Head Press, 1944, p.16.

zeal of Massalski himself lead to a great development of elementary education in Lithuania. But the movement was not permanent. In 1777 there were in Lithuania 300 Parish schools with 5,000 children of whom about 1,000 were from the gentry. By 1790 only a few had survived."[60]

This notion was simply too radical or revolutionary for the landowning *Szlachta* in Poland (the *Korona* or Crown Territories - meaning the lands of old Piast Poland), and in reaction, most members of this "estate" opposed the education of the lower orders.[61]

It can be stated with a considerable degree of certainty that many of the 'noble' sentiments voiced concerning the improvement of the peasants' condition in Poland-Lithuania were largely rhetorical in nature, and that most of the *Szlachta* found it impossible to envision a time during which Polish serfs[62] might become free men, let alone be allowed access to an education. Despite the fact that the "Commonwealth" was on the verge of total dismemberment the majority of the *Szlachta* held steadfastly to their fantasy of a "Nation of Nobles" in which the serf was but a chattel or commodity - an essential 'object' devoid of the human characteristics required for equal participation in a venture of such magnitude. The suggestion that the services,

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[60] A. Bruce Boswell, "Educational Reform in Poland" In The Slavonic Review, vol.III, no. 7, (June) 1924.
[61] Nicholas Hans, "Polish Schools in Russia 1772 - 1830" In The Slavonic Review, vol.XXXVIII, no.91, 1960.
[62] The German peasant immigrants, known as *Hollanders*, and some of the poorest Peasant Nobles were, by this time, also being pressured into serfdom.

or input of the *Chlopi* (who were essentially slaves) or free peasants might be required in order to assure the survival of the nation was simply too repulsive.[63]

Nevertheless, the reform movement kept gaining momentum in other areas until it had enough power to force the *Sejm* to pass a new constitution on May 3, 1791. Many of the more abused privileges of the *Szlachta* were abolished by this act as was much of the "machinery of the "democracy of the gentry"."[64] The monarchy became hereditary, the *Liberum Veto* was abolished, towns were granted new constitutions, Burghers rights were expanded, the peasants "were placed under protection of the law and their serfdom was mitigated."[65]

In opposition to this radical new constitution a group of *Szlachta* and Magnates banded together to form the Confederacy of Targowica and implored Catherine II of Russia to intervene. As a result of this intervention the second partition occurred in 1792. Seeing the imminence of a 'final' partition, Tadeusz Kosciuszko began the Uprising of 1794 by swearing "in the great square of Cracow to fight until the end for the liberty, the integrity, and the

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[63]A poignant example of the attitude of the *Szlachta* - even of its most enlightened members - is this remark attributed to Prince Adam Czartoryski: "We don't need Peruvian gold mines. The skin of the peasants - that's the best Peru." Quoted in: Himka, J-P. "The Background to Emigration: Ukrainians of Galicia and Bukovyna, 1848-1914." In Manoly Lupul (Ed.). A Heritage in Transition: Essays in the History of Ukrainians in Canada. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1982, p.11.

[64]Szczepanski, op.cit., p.13

[65]Szczepanski, ibid., p.13

independence of his native land."[66] If his words had an idealistic ring to them, his appraisal of the difficulty of the upcoming struggle certainly made up for that. He was convinced that it would take the efforts of the entire population, including those of the serfs and free peasants to stop the Russian and Prussian armies. On May 7, 1794 he published the Polaniec Manifesto, "which proclaimed the liberty of the peasant and freed immediately from serfdom those who had taken up arms."[67] After some initial successes the Uprising lost momentum and was crushed. Kosciuszko was wounded at the final battle of Maciejowice and was taken prisoner by the Russians.[68]

The third, and final, partition followed the defeat of the Poles by the Russian and Prussian forces and the *Rzeczpospolita* or Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth disappeared from the map of Europe. One-fifth of the territory and 23 percent of the population went to Prussia. Slightly less territory (18 percent) but 32 percent of the population fell to Austria. Russia, however, took the largest chunk of

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[66]Halecki, ibid., p.206.
[See also: Maria Konopnicka's famous poem, "*Przysiega*",("The Oath") which dramatizes Kosciuszko's pledge to free Poland.
[67]ibid., p.207.
In fact, this manifesto did not free the serfs, it only stated the opinion that they were, as men, entitled to attain their freedom in some (unstated) manner.
[68]Kosciuszko was allowed to emigrate to the United States in 1796. He returned to Europe where he continued to work for the Polish cause with Polish emigres. He disapproved of the alliance with Napoleon and also of a similar subsequent attempt under Alexander I of Russia. Disillusioned, and shunned by many of his fellow Poles, he preferred to spend his last years in Switzerland. He died there in 1817. His body was returned to Poland and placed in the tomb of kings in Wawel Castle in Krakow.

territory, 62 percent, along with 45 percent of the population.[69]

"Thus ended the history of the Republic of the Nobles and a long period of foreign domination began."[70] And, along with this catastrophe came a philosophical rationalization and a new sense of 'mission'. Oskar Halecki's observation - probably a Pole's "lament" - indicates the form of this new philosophy of existence.

> The Poles of the eighteenth century could not remedy this situation, because they had no longer the deep religious faith which had animated their ancestors when they tried the great experiment of the Royal Republic and defended the frontiers of Christendom. Hence, Providence sent them a great ordeal which was to purify the national soul and give their sons to behold in the humiliation of expiation a new historic mission, worthy of a great past.[71]

The bitter and often bloody struggle for independence began with a mystic or perhaps religious sense of mission - in many ways like a "holy war". The romantic poets' epic lays of lament for "Poland - the Christ of Nations" urged the 'warrior class' (and later the 'whole' nation) on in their noble quest. Poland, like Christ had to rise again, and independence, like the Resurrection, would be granted by God. The Polish nation only had to prove itself worthy.

The Age of Romanticism witnessed the creation of many pages of beautiful poetry; the birthplace of many noble and wonderful ideas. Unfortunately, it was also a period of absolute political silliness with a nearly incomparable lack

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[69] Arnold and Zychowski, op.cit., p.77.
[70] ibid., p.76.
[71] Halecki, op.cit., p.213.

of astuteness on the parts of both the poets and the soldiers. Even Jozef Pilsudski, the man under whose leadership Poland finally did acheive independence, remarked that the insurrectionists believed that they were seeing the dawn while in fact they were watching the sunset[72]; they simply were not synchronized with events and ideas in the rest of Europe.

Worse still, this "romantic bugle-chasing" brought the *Szlachta* into conflict with the "lower orders" (mainly peasants) who for the most part did not identify with their romantic mission and preferred not to become seriously involved in the struggles until the Uprising of 1863-1864.

After the suppression of the Kosciuszko Uprising of 1794 many of the insurrectionists fled to France where they formed the Polish Napoleonic Legions. Through this alliance with Napoleon they were able to see the Duchy of Warsaw established by the Treaty of Tilsit, 1807, but not before many of their numbers perished in battles in Italy and San Domingo. Being loyal allies to the end, they followed Napoleon into Russia, retreated with him and were among the defeated at Waterloo. The Congress of Vienna, 1815, redrew the map of Europe, and liquidated the Duchy of Warsaw. Tsar Alexander I of Russia then "magnanimously" created the "Congress" Kingdom of Poland, with himself as its monarch.

This arrangement, which naturally did not satisfy Polish aspirations for independence, was suspended in 1832

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[72]Jedrzejewicz, W. Jozef Pilsudski: 1867-1935, Zyciorys. London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1986, p.1.

(to 1862) after an unsuccesful revolt of the *Szlachta* and was finally abolished in 1874. This part of the former territories of the Commonwealth was, by Imperial decree, from that time forward referred to as "by-Vistula land". Any mention of Poland was forbidden. Two other creations of the Congress of Vienna, the Grand Duchy of Posen, under Prussian control, and the Republic of Cracow, under Austrian 'care' were abolished in 1846 and 1848, respectively, after insurrections.

It must be explained however, that the Uprising of 1846 was a premature manifestation of the emotions accompanying the "Springtime of Nations" coming to fruition in Western Europe. At least in this instance the *Szlachta* were not slow in seizing an opportunity; they were too early!

In 1848, the uprisings in the three "occupied" areas were not synchronized well enough, and the various authorities could capitalize on this lack of coordination. In addition, the struggle for independence took on a new dimension when some Galician peasants, who were ostensibly 'fed-up' with the destructive risings of the *Szlachta*, rose up against this group and proceeded to terrorize them into submission.

The shocked and outraged *Szlachta* accused Metternich of paying the peasants to create this *Jacquerie*. Others later attempted to prove that this misguided act of the peasants was essentially anti-Polish and inspired by either Austro-German or even Ukrainian nationalist movements. Very

seldom did the *Szlachta* entertain the notion that perhaps their lack of social responsibility had anything to do with it. If anything, they were inspired to what may be likened to even greater fits of delusion; as if the struggle for Polish independence was dependent solely on their efforts, now that even the peasants had betrayed them. Norman Davies writes that,"[for] the Poles, it was a rude awakening to the fact that Polish-speaking peasants could not be relied on to support Polish noblemen in patriotic enterprises. But for the peasants it was a liberating experience of the first importance."[73]

While the uprisings in Poland did not achieve independence, they did complement the revolutions occurring elsewhere, all over Europe. Parliamentary and other reforms were brought in everywhere, and Europe experienced a kind of socio-cultural rebirth. Ominously, the Polish revolutionary efforts appeared to take on even more of a nationalistic overtone; drifting far away from the rectification of social problems. Karl Marx commented in 1848, that, "[the] cause of Poland's liberation became inseparable from revolution, and Pole and revolutionary became a synonym."[74] By 1848, the Romanticism of the poets was being transformed into the propaganda and polemics of essentially violent revolutionaries.

Still, fifteen years were to elapse before the next major rising occurred. The Uprising of 1863, the "January

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[73]Davies, 1982, op.cit., vol II, p.148.
[74]Arnold and Zychowski, op.cit., p.115.

Insurrection" was by no means an impetuous act. It was rather the desperate finale to many years of unanswered pleas and unsuccessful negotiation with the Russian government. Also, ambitious projects in international diplomacy had failed to bring about direct (armed) intervention. They had not even brought the support and leverage required to force the Tsarist government into granting a constitution. So, facing life under a new emperor, Alexander II, an autocrat who was quoted as saying that there were only two kinds of Poles, those he hated and those that he despised, the insurrectionists made their desperate bid.

Their first act was to send a letter to the Tsar demanding assurances that the Polish nation would not be further discriminated against; that Polish schooling would be allowed to expand; and that there be some resolution of the peasant[75] and Jewish questions.

With the statement of these demands an awkward pause occurred during which neither side pressed its demands. Both sides presumably had time to reassess their positions and to make decisions which would avoid violent consequences. The Russians broke the stalemate by refusing to accede to any of the demands. They even instituted punitive or "preventive" conscription into the military to eliminate potential revolutionaries.[76]

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[75]Serfdom, which was abolished in Prussian Poland in 1823, in Austrian Poland in 1848, and in Russia in 1861, was still in effect in Russian Poland!

[76]Piotr Wandycz, The Lands of Partitioned Poland. Seattle:

The revolution began on January 22, 1863 as an open attack on Russian military garrisons, but soon the revolutionaries were forced to change their tactics to guerilla warfare. They were no match for the larger and better armed Russian forces.

As soon as the Russians saw that Britain and France weren't going to intervene, and that Bismarck and the Prussians were concerned about insurrection in Prussian Poland, the Russians sent in their most ruthless generals, Fedor Berg and Mikhail Muraviev (the Hangman) to suppress the rising.

The rebels continued to fight until the spring of 1864, and some even until October, 1864. The last of some 1229 battles was fought in spring of 1865![77] No matter how valiantly the insurrectionists fought, they could not win against the overwhelming superiority of the Russian armies. The Uprising was crushed, and with it the Romantic or Idealist spirit of the *Szlachta*.

The consequences of defeat included profound social and economic changes in addition to the expected persecution. The *Szlachta* was effectively decimated and a social vacuum was created leaving the peasants and the Jews to fill this void. The intellectual and moral climate changed and there was an increased tendency to work for economic and cultural improvements rather than toward rebellion. In fact, some

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[76](cont'd) University of Washington Press, 1974, pp.168-169.
[77]Slownik Historii Polski. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1969, pp.307-308.

historians call this period a time of "Organic Work" or "Positivism". The *Szlachta's* sense of mission changed. They came to the conclusion that independence could only be achieved through the efforts of the whole nation - the *Szlachta*, the Peasantry, and the other Estates together.

In order to acheive this "universal" movement, the peasants had to be made aware of their heritage; they had to be made nationally and historically conscious. The *Szlachta* made it their new mission to 'educate' these "most Polish" beings of the lower orders at a time when a great industrial boom and accompanying prosperity facilitated their upward mobility.

Some of the peasants started to adopt a new agrarian populist orientation and even to challenge the *Szlachta* in the political arena. Peasant political parties came into existence with the formation of the *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* (The Polish Peoples' Party, or PSL) in July of 1895 in Galician (Austrian) Poland. In fact, there is some reason to believe that the peasants and the *Szlachta* were beginning to behave like two separate nations with very unlike aspirations.

Jan Szczepanski describes the "awakening" of the peasants in this manner:

> Enfranchisement was the starting point of peasant movements and the first step on their way to full and active participation in the national life, in education, and in politics. Progress toward this goal was most rapid in the Prussian section where the economic organization of the peasants played a significant role in their political struggles and in resistance against German colonization. In Austria

and Russia, the peasant movements appeared to be primarily radical leftist movements.[78]

The peasants were enfranchised first in Prussian Poland where the *Szlachta* was least numerous and not very powerful. The German rationale for this enfranchisement was two-fold in that they sought to completely subdue the *Szlachta* through this and also to win over the peasants to the German side with such a magnanimous act. In some ways the Germans were successful in this but they allowed their nationalistic tendencies to go too far.

The *kulturkampf* was responsible for much discrimination against the Poles because they were neither Germans nor Lutherans. This same policy allowed for the more fanatic elements of German society (eg. the HKT Society[79]) to push through some very specific anti-Polish policies.

The peasants, who bore the brunt of these offensive attitudes resorted to actions ranging from the comical ingenuity of Drzymala with his "mobile" home[80], to the more violent Wreschen incident and the Posen School Strikes. Their education in the compulsory eight-year *Volkschule* had failed to Germanize them but had made them literate and nationally conscious. The population of Prussian Poland had

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[78]Szczepanski, op.cit., pp.19-20.

[79]See: Richard Wonser Tims, Germanizing Prussian Poland. New York: Columbia University Press, 1941.
See also: Ian F. D.Morrow, "The Prussianisation of the Poles" In The Slavonic Review. vol.XV, no.34, (July) 1936, pp.153-164.

[80]A Prussian regulation prevented him from building a house on his property. Additionally, he could not legally own the land if he didn't reside there, so, he took up housekeeping in a wagon - not unlike a Gypsy wagon - in order to circumvent the ridiculous regulations.

the highest literacy rate of the three zones at the time independence was achieved in 1918.

The Austrian area was perhaps the least nationally repressed, but the "grinding" poverty of the peasants did not allow for much mobility in society. Schooling for the lower orders was not of the same quality or availability as in Prussian Poland.

There was also a lesser degree of national awareness - but this was steadily growing, particularly among the Ukrainian peasantry. It is worth noting that both Polish and Ukrainian school systems were allowed to operate in this zone, but they did not receive more than minimal support from the Austrian government.

Russian Poland was the most repressed nationally, politically, and educationally. It was also the most diverse ethnically. A plethora of languages were spoken in this region, with Russian as the official language of the Courts and of commerce. It is not surprising therefore, that the peasants in this area were the least conscious of their national or ethnic origins. The Polish and Polonized *Szlachta* dominated the lesser orders in the political arena, while trying on the other hand to propagate an idealized version of Polish nationalism.

The vast majority of the peasants retreated into the traditions of "peasanthood" and refused to have much to do with either the Poles or the Russians. They even referred to themselves as *tutejsi* (from here) when asked about their

ethnic background.

Given such diverse conditions of existence, it is not difficult to understand why the peasants in the various areas of the former Commonwealth were not able or willing to join enmasse with the insurrectionists in a major revolt in 1905. The conditions for an uprising of the whole nation were not present at that time. Indeed, they never were!

Only a world war of such proportions that the major powers of continental Europe would be destroyed could give the Poles the opportunity to seize their independence.

Jozef Pilsudski, a leading member of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), recognised this and applied himself to the task of creating an organization capable of capitalizing on the opportunity when it presented itself. With the approval of the Party, Pilsudski organized his "Legions" as the military arm of the PPS.

These units saw action during the First World War, admittedly on the side of the Central Powers and they became an experienced "army", ready to fill the void and to maintain order, by the time of the German withdrawal from Polish territory.

Another Polish army, under the command of General Haller, fought in France on the side of the Allies. This military force was associated with the National Democratic Party, whose leader, Roman Dmowski, was a veteran politician who had been a member of the Russian *Dumas* prior to the Bolshevik Revolution. He was also a nationalist and a

conservative; in other words, politically, he was Pilsudski's "opposite number". The National Democrats and other Poles in the West were able to establish diplomatic relations with the British and French governments, while Pilsudski, with the approval of Germany and Austria, declared Poland to be an independent state.

The Treaty of Versailles, and the subsequent conferences attempted to determine the boundaries of the new Polish state -the *Rzeczpospolita Polska* (The Republic of Poland). This proved not to be an easy task because the ethnic composition and nationalist aspirations of the population of the area claimed by the interim government was so varied.

War, first with the Ukrainians, then with the Soviets, controversial plebiscites over the western boundaries, and the issue of minority rights further complicated the delineation of boundaries of the new Poland.

The resulting state was a multicultural entity reminiscent of the pre-Partition Commonwealth (though considerably smaller in area). Approximately one-third of the population was not ethnically Polish, and the majority, fifty-two percent, of the overall population were peasants (usually identified as owners of farms of fifty hectares or smaller).[81] Some nine percent of the population were agricultural workers who did not own land,[82] but none-the-less tend to be grouped with the peasants.

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[81] Szczepanski, op.cit., p.25.
[82] ibid., p.26.

It is under these social-cultural conditions that the Polish republic entered the final phase of the Era of Amalgamation. Within the span of one generation the rising tide of nationalism and the events of, and immediately following, the Second World War combined to finally 'put to rest' the multicultural Polish state. The Poland which emerged after the Second World War was once again ethnically homogeneous. In the one thousand years of the recorded history of Poles they can claim only to have attained this twice. First during the first half of the Piast kingdom and againt after World War II. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Partitioned Commonwealth, and and the Second Republic of the Inter-war period were all multicultural entities.

The Inter-war republic, being the last manifestation of this type of state, was therefore the arena in which both the cohesive and the divisive forces which such states generate reached their crescendo. It was also the major scene of the historical/national and political nascence of the peasants. This *estate* from which the very "founders" of the Polish state may have come once again became visible. The peasants descent from the mainstream of society and from political power was stopped during the Partition period and circumstances permitted them to advance to a politically envious position. The inexorable process of urbanization and politicization that had been promoted after 1863 reached full momentum during the Inter-war period. The following

chapters will examine this in greater detail.

III. INDEPENDENT POLAND, 1918 - 1939

> IN 1918, AT THE CLOSE OF WHAT [sic] was then called the Great War, Poland reappeared on the map of Europe after an enforced absence of one hundred and twenty-three years. Various parts that had been stolen by Russia, Austria and Germany were reassembled by the victorious allies, and with throbbing excitement an old-new nation resumed its stumbling heroic course through history.[83]

In writing this paragraph in his epic novel, Poland, James A. Michener repeated two fallacies which continuously plague students of modern Polish history. In the first place, he reduced the events surrounding the re-establishment of the Polish state to such an extreme degree that one is left with the impression that the "Allies" were solely responsible for Poland's independence. Even the most elementary textbooks indicate that this was not the case, but it may be reasonable to give Mr. Michener the benefit of the doubt by surmising that he simply reduced the sequence of events too drastically.

His statement leaves us with the false impression that the "victorious allies," primarily Britain and France, were responsible for Polish independence when, in fact, the Central Powers allowed it to happen when they withdrew their forces from the area only after negotiations with the Polish Regency Council, the interim government. Military considerations, and not pressure in the shape of American President Wilson's demands for the re-establishment of Poland as set forth in his "Fourteen Points" of January,

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[83] James A. Michener, Poland. New York: Random House, 1983, p.353.

1918, were the reason for this withdrawal. In a sense therefore, the re-emergence of the Polish state was probably parthenogenetic and not the result of the policies of any of the major powers.

In addition, Marshall Pilsudski's declaration of Independence was actually met in the West with little enthusiasm, and even some disbelief. This *fait accompli* left the Allies in the politically uncomfortable position of having backed the wrong group of Polish "freedom fighters" -the Paris based, Polish National Committee under the leadership of Roman Dmowski.

Michener's second fallacy is not so much a distortion of fact as of analogy; it is a "false analogy". Poland is a state - a political construct - and not some personified entity. Technically , a nation cannot resume a "stumbling heroic course through history" - perhaps, only its government or its people can do that.

Even this may be forgiven Michener, who is after-all a writer of fictional novels, but it must be emphasized that he has perpetuated a particularly insidious approach to viewing Polish affairs or history.[84] In Polish

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[84] Thankfully, Michener avoids the use of another, probably less destructive analogy - the tendency to compare states to animals. While this may be very visual and perhaps literary, it serves no useful purpose for the serious historian. It does however, become a tool for the polemicist and propagandizer.

Poland has at times been compared to the "spiny little fish" on which a huge pike (Russia) will choke (Adam Mickiewicz created this analogy when responding to Pushkin's image of Russia as a beast which devours lesser fish.), but most often it has been portrayed as a bird of prey - the

historiography, Poland is often personified as a righteous suffering being, sometimes as the "Christ of Nations" of the Romantics, and at other times simply as a victim of oppression.

No matter what form they take such protrayals can only be socially counter-productive and therefore their use is ethically/morally incorrect. David Fischer explains the situation in this way:

> In the historiography of Poland, a different set of anologies is customary. One is the traditional idea, deeply rooted in Polish literature, that Poland is the "Christ among nations," a noble transcendant being which has suffered for the sins of all humanity, betrayed by the Jews and crucifed by the Romans. The result of this humbug is that history becomes, in Namier's phrase, a visit of condolence. The Polish people have been encouraged by their historians to develop a self-righteous sense of persecution with few equals in the modern world. Every national misfortune becomes a measure of the depravity of mankind - all mankind, that is, except the martyr nation, whose citizens are Poles apart. This myth is profoundly dysfunctional to any constructive and statesmanlike attempt to deal with complex and critical diplomatic problems of Eastern Europe.[85]

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[84](cont'd) white eagle of the regal ensignias of the Piasts and the Jagiellons. Fischer continues his examination of analogies in Polish historiography with these remarks:

> Other studies of Polish history tend to adopt a very different kind of analogical imagery. It is historiographically conventional to compare Poland to a bird - all feathers and fragile bones, big-beaked and small brained, beautiful but slightly wierd, and sometimes a little sinister.(Fischer, 1970, p.246).

While the use of this sort of imagery may appear to be comic and absurd, its ability to incite people or to emotionalize an issue should not be minimized. Consider how powerful is the image of the Phoenix rising from its ashes - Poland rising from the ashes of Partition and war! This device was used repeatedly in polemical tracts issued in Inter-War and in the People's Republic.

[85]David Hackett Fischer, Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought. New York: Harper & Row, 1970,

It must be acknowledged that this Polish historiographical tendency has created problems for the student of Polish history, but the "rationalist" attitude, adopted mainly by Western writers as an historiographical alternative, has proved to be equally confounding in that it seems always to presuppose the ideal correctness of the "middle ground" in any controversy. In many instances this approach is totally inadequate and lacks the sophistication required for the study of a state as politically diverse and as complex socially, as was Inter-war Poland.

What is required is an approach which can accomodate, as well as counter-balance, the apparent "rudeness" of post-war radical revisionism without resorting to the use of "Whig" or congratulatory epithets as mere balancing weights. It must also avoid becoming a rambling social history which recreates a panorama so broad that the issue being discussed is dwarfed or in some other way diminished. The most useful historiographic approach, it seems, would be one which "particularizes", and then determines the overall effect by measuring, and comparing, the intensity of the reactions or tendencies of the various social classes and other groups. It must recognize the lack of homogeneity in the Polish nation, and try to make sense of the diverse, if not actually divergent, tendencies of the component groups. Otherwise, the written history of Poland will continue to be assessed as "hopelessly paradoxical".

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[85](cont'd) p.246.

Inter-war Poland itself was not a paradox as its historians, critics, and other observers maintain. It was rather a multi-ethnic or multicultural state saddled with a political system that could not resolve the conflicts between the federalist, nationalist, and separatist camps. Due to external pressure and the desire to appear to be in possession of a viable, functional government, it could, at first, only allow for a clumsy form of compromise which involved the adoption and blending of incompatible points of view, often generating more problems in their combined forms than they would have as individual policies.[86] Obviously

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[86]Wladyslaw Pobog-Malinowski illustrates the situation in this way:

> Dla olbrzymiej wiekszości zagadnieniem centralnym nie byla kwestia granic, ani grozba najazdu - o wiele mocniej przykuwaly uwage sprawy wewnetrzne, dzwieczace jaskrawa walka rywalizacyjna stronnictw, grup, jednostek....
>
> Sytuacja wewnetrzna - w pierwszych zwlaszcza tygodniach byla blizka bezladu....
>
> Przy tak straszliwie ciezkiej sytuacji wewnetrznej przeszkody wcale nie male wyrastaly na drodze do nawiazania stosunkow z panstwami zwycieskiej Koalicji....
>
> Najwieksze na tej drodze przeszkody stwarzal pozostajacy w Paryzu - pod prezesura Dmowskiego - Polski Komitet Narodowy.... Pilsudski w liscie do Dmowskiego prosil go o ulatwienie rokowan, podkreslajac, ze "nade wszystko zyczy sobie unikniecia podwojnego przedstawicielstwa Polski wobec aliantow", bo "tylko jedno wspolne przedstawicielstwo moze sprawic, ze nasze zadania zostana wysluchane". "Opierajac sie na naszej starej znajomosci - pisal Pilsudski - mam nadzieje, ze w tym wypadku i w chwili tak powaznej co najmniej kilku ludzi, jesli - niestety - nie cala Polska - potrafi sie wzniesc ponad interesy partii, klik i grup....
>
> For the vast majority the central problem was not the boundaries issue, or the threat of invasion -demanding greater attention were internal affairs, resounding of the shrill aggressive rivalry of the

therefore, political immaturity combined with serious pressure from neighbouring states, and interference from the more distant super-powers, compounded the problems of the Polish state.

Keeping in mind that the internal tendencies were more reminiscent of the "anarchic democracy" of the "Nation of Nobles" than similar to those of modern 20th century states, it is not surprising that most of the "Poles", as well as the rest of the world, failed to realize that, given such impossible conditions, the Polish state would face nothing more than dilemmas - i.e. at best, it could be reactive but not proactive. The end result of the insensitive, and even hostile, external pressure as applied to a rather disfunctional parliamentary system was the catastrophe of 1939.

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[86](cont'd) parties, groups, smaller units....

> The internal situation - especially in the first weeks was close to disorder....
>
> With such a terribly heavy internal situation no small obstacles arose in the process of establishing relations with the states of the victorious coalition....
>
> The largest obstacles to this process had been created by the Polish National Committee - under Dmowski's presidency....Pilsudski, in a letter to Dmowski, asked him to facilitate negotiations, emphasizing, that " before all else he wished to avoid dual Polish representation to the allies", because "only one common representation could cause our demands to be heard". "Relying on our old acquaintance [with each other] - wrote Pilsudski - I hope that in this instance and at such a critical moment at least a few people, alas - unfortunately - not the whole of Poland - will be able to transcend the interests of parties , cliques and groups.... [Wladyslaw Pobog-Malinowski, Najnowsza Historia Polityczna Polski, vol. II, London: B. Swiderski, 1961, pp.165-168.]

Curiously, statesmen, historians, and writers from all over the world still continue to engage in debates over controversies which remain, in their eyes, as examples, either of the "Polish enigma," or of "Polish ineptitude." M. K. Dziewanowski, a noted American historian, makes the rather tedious observation that, "[t]here are few countries that generate as much violent controversy and diametrically opposed passions as does Poland. For indeed, this country is, and always has been, a puzzling paradox."[87] Another American historian, Richard M. Watt, demonstrates two presumably extreme and opposing historiographical tendencies as viewed from the "rationalist" perspective.

> It is now quite common, and it serves the purpose of the present Communist government, to dismiss the independent Poland of 1918-1939 as nothing more than a shabby and inefficient pseudofascist regime. As this argument runs, Pilsudski and his henchmen played a silly, imperialistic charade. They were anti-Semitic and pro-German. They oppressed both the Polish people and the minority groups that they had greedily and shortsightedly absorbed. Poland of those years is described as a nation run by power-mad colonels, foolish cavalrymen, and rich landowners all of whom acquiesced in the implementation of a predatory and opportunistic foreign policy. In the end, these wretched persons were duped by Hitler, who swiftly snuffed out their wicked reign. The rapid collapse of Poland in 1939 is considered to prove this assessment of Poland between the two World Wars.
>
> On the other hand, it pleases many of the defenders of the Poland of 1918-1939 to regard that period as one of great accomplishments. These persons do not concede that any significant errors were made in the governing of Poland, and that they regard its foreign policy as generally being very cleverly conducted. At the very least, they regard Poland's diplomacy as having been handled fully as well as circumstances permitted. The defeat of 1939

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[87] M. K. Dziewanowski, Poland in the 20th Century. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977, p.vii..

> is ascribed entirely to lack of support by Poland's allies. The subsequent demise of the Government-in-exile is looked upon as purely the result of Allied "treachery at Yalta."
>
> The truth, of course, lies somewhere between these two extremes.[88]

This "rationalist approach" fails to consider that the two supposedly "untrue" extremes may contain elements of the truth. The truth, therefore, contrary to the wishes of the "rationalists," might not lie "between the two extremes," but across the entire spectrum. In fact, this continuum becomes rather meaningless - it ceases to exist - within the broader "particularizing" approach.

It is only in this way that the analysis and evaluation of the influence of the various components of the Polish state may be made possible. This, in turn, would allow us to construct a more accurate picture of the multicultural dynamics of the Inter-war Polish state.

Limitations

For the purposes of this study, a limited "particularization" at two levels - one disciplinary and the other socio-cultural - were combined within a, necessarily, very brief "description" or compilation of important background data and information about Inter-war Poland. In addition, a broader, but still very brief, social historical summary is provided in order to place this data in

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[88]Richard M. Watt, Bitter Glory: Poland and its Fate, 1918-1939. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979, p.455.

chronological and social context. The schema for this section is arranged so that the social/ cultural aspects of the state could be discussed first; so that the people or population could be described first. A discussion of the economic situations faced by these people, as well as of the fluctuating forces encountered by, and within, the Polish state, comprises the second topic, while the most difficult or complex - the political aspect - becomes the third. A short summary completes the chapter. The following chapter will examine the Peasant group or "estate" more minutely, while focusing primarily on their involvement with the educational system.

A. Social/Cultural Aspects

> ...[T]he position of the Polish-speaking element in the Polish lands has risen over the centuries from one of uneasy partnership with various other peoples to one of absolute supremacy. In Mieszko's time, the 'Poles' were just one tribe among scores of others; in the old Republic before the Partitions [and in the Second Republic], two-thirds. In the People's Republic, they are 99 per cent.... A wholly Polish Poland has lost the need to worry about its ethnic roots.[89]

The multi-ethnic or multi-national character of the population of Inter-war Poland contributed more to social unrest than did any economic or political notion. Nationalist outcries, by the Poles and by representatives of the multitude of other ethnic groups resident in Poland echoed and reverberated throughout the land. There was

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[89]Davies, 1986, op.cit., p.327.

almost no government policy that did not arouse controversy during legislation or upon implementation, because it was considered to be discriminatory against some ethnic minority group.

This cacophony affected external affairs equally as seriously in that the outcries of the various parties were responsible for the League of Nations demands that the Polish government guarantee the rights of the minorities; for a special Polish-German agreement on the matter; and for often heated diplomatic confrontations between Poland and its Soviet, Czechoslovak, and Lithuanian neighbours.

This caused Polish politicians to lament, on the one hand, that everyone seemed to be minding Poland's business, but it did not seem to prevent some of them from seeking approval, or from looking for guidance in these matters, abroad.

SOME STATISTICS

The census of 1921, which provided a breakdown of the population along ethnic lines. The Poles were listed as the most numerous group at 18,814,200 people, or 69.2% of the population. In descending order the following groups were cited:

Ukrainians - 3,898,400 - 14.3%

Jews - 2,110,400 - 7.8%

B.Russians - 1,060,200 - 3.9%

Germans - 1,059,200 - 3.9%

Lith. - 68,700 - 0.3%

Russians - 56,200 - 0.2%

."Tutejsi"[90] - 49,400 0.1%

Czechs - 30,600 - 0.1%

Others - 29,200 - 0.1%

TOTAL : 27,176,700 people

The evaluative criteria were changed for the census of 1931[91] and this time the ethnic distribution of the society was determined along linguistic lines. The survey asked participants to declare what their "mother-tongue" was.

Poles -21,993,000 - 68.9%

Ukrainians - 4,441,600 - 13.9%

Jews - 2,732,600 - 8.6%

B.Russians - 989,900 - 3.1%

Germans - 741,000 - 2.3%

Lith. - 83,100 - 0.3%

Russians - 138,700 - 0.4%

"Tutejsi" - 707,100 - 2.2%

Czechs - 38,100 - 0.1%

Others - 50,300 - 0.2%

TOTAL: 31,915,800 people

[Source: St. Mauersberg, Szkolnictwo Powszechne dla Mniejszosci Narodowych w Polsce w Latach 1918-1939. Wroclaw:

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[90]"From this place."- not nationally conscious, or unwilling to state ethnic origins.

[91]The last census taken in Inter-war Poland.

Ossolineum, 1968, p.13.]

Of particular interest are the shifts in percentage recorded in the *Tutejsi* category. There were two possible explanations for this occurrence. The first assumes that the tensions between the inhabitants of certain areas had grown so high that people were unwilling to risk reprisal for identifying with a particular ethnic group. The second, and perhaps more radical explanation suggests that certain groups of people, probably the peasants were refusing to identify with any historic or national group - rejecting the general society and withdrawing, as it were to the condition described by Spengler.

While this development might seem curious, it was not beyond the realm of possibility, especially in a country which was experiencing a revival of the Nobility or Gentry (*Szlachta*). The New Social Order, which started to replace the 'Old Heirarchy' already in the last years before the Partitions, was becoming somewhat "top-heavy" in terms of influence in Inter-war Poland. Thomas and Znaniecki write that,"the principle of the [new] heirarchization is in the first place intellectual achievement, and only in the second place wealth, in its modern forms of capital and income."[92] They go on to state that the "intellectual aristocracy" - the intelligentsia - "was almost unrivaled, and succeeded in imposing its standard of values upon the whole system."[93]

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[92]Thomas and Znaniecki, op.cit., p.133.
[93]ibid..

Actually, education and wealth in combination, became the basis for location of the individual in the "New Heirarchy" - and this held true for all strata of the society. Initially, there was considerable potential for mobility within the new social order, but as economic crises disrupted the normal patterns of development of this heirarchy, the upper elements became increasingly defensive of their status. The lower elements reacted to this and became somewhat more alienated from the upper classes. To illustrate this it must be mentioned that even nationally conscious peasants often could not identify with the upper classes in any way other than in their mutual Polishness. It is not surprising therefore that the post-war communist regime expended a great deal of effort to capitalize on this divisive tendency!

B. Economic Aspects

The surface area of the newly established Polish state after its boundaries had been set - was approximately 388,600 km. sq., over which the population of 32,133,000 (1935) was somewhat unevenly distributed. In the southern provinces the population density reached 111 persons, 100 in the central, 98 in the western, and 47 in the eastern areas; for an average of 85 persons per square kilometer.[94] These statistics do not accurately reflect the population pressure

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[94] Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy. Warszawa: Polska Agencja Telegraficzna, 1935, p. 17.

in certain areas. In order for this data to have any real meaning we must understand that these ratios were inversely proportional to the ratios of arable land to wasteland. In fact, the eastern, as well as the southern areas, suffered from severe rural overpopulation; and with a general annual rate of increase of 403,000 people [95] or 1.25%, one of the largest rates in Europe,[96] this situation was not likely to improve. In addition to this rural overpopulation problem , Polish industry at the end of the First World War was in a terrible state and finding it extremely difficult to rebuild itself. Therefore, it couldn't possibly expand quickly enough to take the pressure off the agricultural sector by providing an alternative labour market.

"It is for this reason," writes Janusz Radziwill, "that Poland is applying as much attention to agriculture as to industry."[97] The government actually had very little choice in the matter. The reality of the situation was that 74.5% of the population lived in the country[98] and that 72.3% of the population were employed in some aspect of agriculture.[99]

Antony Polonsky's survey of Polish agriculture of the Inter-war period provides some additional insights.

> A fundamental characteristic of Polish agriculture was the far-reaching fragmentation of peasant

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[95] ibid., p.18.
[96] Janusz Radziwill, "Poland Since the Great War" In, The Slavonic Review. vol. XII, No. 34, 1933, p.300.
[97] ibid..
[98] Z. Ludkiewicz, "Land Reform in Poland" In, The Slavonic Review . Vol. VIII, NO.23, 1929, p. 318.
[99] Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy. op.cit., p.17.

> holdings. ...[A] third of all holdings, or 3.5% of the arable land was held in plots of less than 2 hectares.... Many of these plots were not self-sufficient, and their owners were forced to supplement their earnings by working on larger farms.
>
> ....
>
> Large landowning was a significant feature of Polish agriculture. ...[In] 1921 0.9 per cent of all holdings, but *47.3 per cent of the arable land*,[sic] was in farms of more than 50 hectares. ...well over half was in estates of more than 1000 hectares. Some were truly gigantic: the Zamoyski estate covered 191,000 hectares, the Radziwill estate 177,000 hectares, the comparatively modest Potocki estate 19,000 hectares....
>
> ....
>
> The Land Reform bills of 1920 and 1925, which provided for the annual parcellation of 200,000 hectares, could not, in these unfavourable conditions, do more than keep pace with the rapidly rising population.
>
> Small producers, the overwhelming majority of the peasants, met additional problems. State policies of favouring heavy industry and large landowners hurt them.... The Depression intensified these difficulties, and led to the increasing impoverishment of the village. Agricultural problems were among the most complex the new state was to attempt to solve.[100]

Various solutions, including the reclamation of some two million acres of the eastern marsh lands[101], and the opening up of colonies in the former German possessions in Africa,[102] were seriously considered. Obviously, some of the solutions were more effective than others , but overall they failed to remedy the situation.

It must be noted that as the purchasing power of the peasants and agricultural workers decreased during the Depression, so too did the internal markets of Polish

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[100]Antony Polonsky, Politics in Independent Poland 1921 - 1939. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972, pp.11-16.
[101]Radziwill, op.cit., p.300.
[102]Ludkiewicz, op.cit., p.330.

industries. This, in turn, further slowed the rate of industrial development which was already seriously inhibited by a lack of capital, lack of foreign investment, and, most critically, by a lack of foreign markets.

The government, in response to this downward spiral, instituted a policy of deflation in order to maintain the prestige value of the Polish *Zloty* which was still on the gold standard.[103] This increased the hardship faced by the rural population, but it did provide something of a reprieve for the lumber and mining sectors. Poland was, after-all, "one of the richest countries on the Continent as regards mineral wealth and sources of energy"[104] and it was commonly felt that development of these resources would enable Poland to provide the basis for the expansion of tertiary industry; and thereby to achieve economic stability.

Unfortunately, there was no substantial increase in momentum in these sectors until two or three years before World War II. By that time it was too late - the existence of the Republic was soon to be terminated, and no one would ever know whether it could have become economically stable.

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[103]Simon Segal, The New Poland and the Jews . New York: Lee Furman Inc., 1938 , pp.114-115.
[104]Radziwill, op.cit., p.300.

C. Political Aspects

The boundaries of the Polish Second Republic were established by belligerent action as well as through negotiation. The new state fought no less than six wars concurrently; the Ukrainian War of 1918-1919, the Posnanian War with Germany (resolved by the Treaty of Versailles, 1919), the Silesian Risings (settled by the Geneva Convention of 1922), the war with Czechoslovakia over Teschen, 1919-1920, the Lithuanian War (technically terminated by the truce of October, 1920, but no binding peace treaty was ever signed by either party), and the Soviet War, which was the most desperate of all officially resolved by the Treaty of Riga, 1921.[105] Out of the

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[105]Davies, 1982, op.cit., pp. 397-399.

Norman Davies, writes in what is perhaps the most comprehensive description of those "early conflicts", that, "the Allied Powers [did not] exert the authority which they claimed to be theirs. Their efforts to arbitrate by distant preaching were despised by all of the parties concerned." (Davies, 1982, p.401) This clearly indicates his position that the military victories were rightfully claimed by the Polish High Command as the result of their own planning and the efforts of the rather poorly equipped, but nonetheless very enthusiastic Polish troops, and were not attributable to French (via General Weygand), British (anti-Bolshevik machinations), or American (supplies of materiel and financing) intervention.

The Polish Opposition Parties and the "Yellow Press" continually denied the validity of Pilsudski's, and the military's, claims, and thereby contributed much to the creation of the myth of Polish military ineptitude so evident in the "releases" of both the German and Soviet propaganda machines during World War II.

In fact, the Allies also exhibited skepticism about Polish abilities. Just to cite one example, they relegated Polish Air Force units to reserve or "stand-by" roles (actually questioning the flying ability of seasoned pilots) during the integration of these units into the R.A.F. after the fall of France. The particularly effective actions of Polish units during the air war over Britain certainly changed Allied perceptions, not only of the training and

confusion and carnage of these wars unfolded a peculiar multi-ethnic state with a parliamentary system of government in which the various frustrated nationalist groups and their equally dismayed federalist opponents would engage in bitter and often destructive rivalry. It often appeared that the national issues which were incompletely resolved on the battlefields, continued to re-emerge and fester in the parliament - and to erupt violently from there - much to the chagrin of both the leaders and the average "man in the street." It seems that any subject of legislation , ranging from aspects of the economic situation, to land reform, and especially to public education, became the focus of violent controversy.

This, in turn, led to increased disruption of the legislative process and consequently to Pilsudski's *coup d'etat* of May, 1926. After this date, the "Sejmocracy" was replaced with a reluctant dictatorship which was to last until the drawing-up of a new constitution in 1935. This event, however, very nearly coincided with Pilsudski's

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[105](cont'd) skills of the Poles, but of the abilities of their leaders as well.

It is important to note here that there were some very serious consequences, on many different plains, to the unbridled tactics of the main Opposition Parties and especially of the irresponsible "Yellow Press". To this day, many issues concerning Inter-war Poland are confounded by the writings and other residue of the opposition groups.

In this light, it may be possible to understand Marshall Pilsudski's, perhaps apocryphal remarks to the effect that there was no need for lavatories in the *Sejm* or Parliament, because the "*Right* defecates on the *Left*, the *Left* on the *Right*, and the Press carries all of this beyond Poland's borders", [only to tarnish Poland's name in international opinion].(A "joke" from the Inter-war period related by W. Adamowicz - original source unknown).

death, and did not precipitate a return to a more widely acceptable democratic system. Pilsudski's successors, the "Colonels' Clique", did not have his charisma , his vision, or his abilities. They could not even come to agree among themselves on what direction their government ought to take and, during the final four years of the existence of the Second Republic, it was often remarkably uninspired. This *denouement* is best described by Richard M. Watt, who writes:

> ...Pilsudski's death tore an immense hole in practically every part of Polish political life. ...Pilsudski had provided a sort of supreme moral authority that was basic to the organization of the government of independent Poland. ...[he] was the cement that held the whole structure of government together. Now he was gone, and the Polish leaders he left behind were devastated.
>
> ...[T]hey could only think in terms of how the Commandant would have wanted affairs handled.
>
> ....
>
> This, then, was the political system that Poland carried into World War II. It had been shaped by and for Pilsudski; ...the mechanism was operated by a few of his heirs who were considerably less talented than their onetime leader. It was a government that was neither totalitarian nor fascist, but it was certainly authoritarian. It was not notably efficient, but it did enjoy the general support of the Polish people, who had never known any better system.[106]

Indeed, the citizens of the Polish state had not ever known a better system, not even in the early days of the political parties and their participation in the Austrian *Reichsrat*, the Russian *Duma*, or (more minimally) in the Prussian *Reichstag*. It was, afterall, in these institutions that their members received their onesided apprenticeships in opposition parties - acquiring very few of the attitudes

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[106]Richard M. Watt, op.cit., pp.341-368.

or postures required by governing parties. They continued to use opposition tactics in the the new state's *Sejm*, when they ought to have taken more constructive approaches.

Admittedly, the whole concept of political parties was rather new to the Poles. After all, the first parties, with an agrarian populist orientation were formed in the Austrian territories in the late 1870's to the 1890's, and in the Russian zone only in 1905. Shadowing these groups , the Socialist groups (not yet parties) started to form in the 1870's in all three areas, but failed to make any serious inroads until the closing years of the century. It was not until the mid-1880's that some Labour and Socialist party-like entities started to appear. Curiously, conservative nationalist groups (composed of major landholders) did gain some seats in the Prussian *Reichstag* in the 1870's, but were overshadowed at least in the perception of the Prussians, by the strong agrarian nationalist peasant factions, who however, failed to acquire such a noteworthy political presence.[107]

Membership in most of the groups, factions, and parties increased fairly rapidly, mainly because these organizations were prepared to try to counter discrimination and oppression - they were, in this way, vehicles of resistance or even of a more subtle form of the struggle for independence. On the eve of the First World War, as if in

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[107]Jerzy Holzer, Mozaika Polityczna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Warszawa: Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1974, pp.17-34.

preparation for some more important or momentous activities, the parties started to drift into two major camps; the pro-Russian enclave under Roman Dmowski's leadership, and the other pro-Austro-Hungarian or pro-German group with Jozef Pilsudski as their *de facto* leader.[108]

Throughout the war years these two camps consolidated their respective positions, and prepared their general goals and political platforms for a new Polish state which was bound to emerge from the devastation of The Great War. Unfortunately, the so-called Dmowski-ites and their Pilsudski-ite counterparts never could put aside their rivalry - not at independence, and not later within the parliament of the independent Polish state. In fact, their "great" rivalry has been immortalized by historians who tend always to see the politics of Inter-war Poland as characterised by the clashes between Dmowski and Pilsudski, and their respective ideologies.

Roman Dmowski, as leader of the National Democratic Party (the *Endecja*), was a Polish nationalist and Catholic conservative. His vision was of an ethnically homogeneous Poland aligned politically and culturally with the super-powers while retaining some sort of amicable arrangement with Russia. Jozef Pilsudski, on the other hand, was a socialist with admitted nationalist tendencies. His vision was of a federated state, which would include Poles and other ethnic groups, all aligned against Russia. The

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[108] ibid., pp.57-60.

incompatibility of their views, in many ways led to most of the great tragedies experienced by the Poles. These included the assasination of the first President, Gabriel Narutowicz, who's only fault seemed to have been that he was elected after the ethnic (national) minority parties broke the deadlock in the election procedings; also the disruption of the parliamentary system, and the subsequent *coup d'etat*; and perhaps most obviously, to the opposition tendencies which typified Polish politics.

To some writers, this Dmowski-Pilsudski clash was typical of the continuous conflict between Polish realism and idealism; between realism and romanticism. Dmowski, is usually seen as the realist, who recognised the reality of Poland's situation *vis a vis* Russia or the Soviet Union, while Pilsudski was the romantic who wanted to recreate the Commonwealth.[109]

Perhaps it would be more appropriate to view their political tendencies as typical of the ideological conflicts between federalist (multiculturalist) and nationalist politicians. Pilsudski's ideas could be considered realistic if it is accepted that he was a federalist, and Dmowski's ideas could be equally realistic given the fact that he was a nationalist.

Federalist policies would undoubtedly affect the Russians, while Polish nationalist policies might not, and from this standpoint it becomes apparent that Pilsudski's

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[109]See:Adam Bromke, Poland's Politics: Idealism vs. Realism. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp.19-51.

anti-Russian stance was more than just the result of his personal feelings. Dmowski's politics were not, of necessity, either anti- or pro-Russian. His nationalist approach did not require antagonizing the Russians.

In any event, the political scene in Inter-war Poland was actually incredibly complex, and this reduction to Dmowski-Pilsudski conflicts, and Federalist-Nationalist arguments does not really demonstrate the intensity of political activity within the state. Norman Davies provides a very succinct description.

> Any full description of the political spectrum in [Inter-war] Poland would require a small encyclopaedia. The proliferation of interests, movements, parties, factions, coalitions, parliamentary circles, youth sections, military wings, community groups, regional associations, trade unions, and cooperative societies, fringe lobbies, and debating clubs (most of which seemed to change their names at regular intervals), was enough to confuse the most persistent enquirer. Yet the confusion is somewhat reduced if one pays attention to three distinct types of political groupings.
>
> Firstly, there were the three great institutions of Polish society - Church, Army, and Intelligentsia, which played a vital, if informal role, in political affairs. They were far from uniform in outlook....
>
> Secondly, there were the four main political movements Socialists, Nationalists, Peasants, and Christian Democrats each of which ...spawned a string of central or regional parties and factions....
>
> Thirdly, there was a whole kaleidoscope of the organizations serving each of the national minorities.... A 'Bloc of Minorities' operated in the Polish Parliament....
>
> [Also there] were a number of vociferous groups on the political fringe. On the Right, there was the Fascist *Falanga* (Phalanx),... On the Left,. the

communist KPP,...[110]

Antony Polonsky, after explaining that with the adoption of the new Constitution in 1921, a bicameral parliamentary system was established, adds that:

> This sophisticated political system did not work well in Poland....
>
> Indeed the variety of political experience combined with proportional representation and the exuberance of the Polish intelligentsia playing a leading role in all political parties led to far-reaching fragmentation. In 1925 there were no less than 92 registered political parties, of which 32 were represented in the sejm and organized in 18 political clubs. Political atomization made it difficult to establish stable and lasting administrations. Between the achievement of independence in 1918 and Pilsudski's coup of May 1926 there were 14 different cabinets....
>
> Faith in the parliamentary system was further undermined by the scale of corruption in public life.... [111]

The system finally broke down when Pilsudski came out of seclusion and successfully carried off a military *coup d'etat*. Unfortunately, he did not have any concrete plans for the internal situation - his orientation was mainly in foreign policy and military affairs. Despite some rather stiff efforts toward a more diplomatic settlement, he reluctantly took on the role of dictator.

Remarkably, the first two years of this dictatorship appeared to be quite mild and somewhat succesful in that peace was maintained and approximately 400 decrees, dealing with all manner of issues, were enacted between 1926 and

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[110]Davies, 1986, op.cit., pp.130-132.
[111]Antony Polonsky, "The Breakdown of Parliamentary Government" In R. F. Leslie, Ed. The History of Poland Since 1863. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp.146-149.

1928[112] However, relations between the Pilsudski-ite *Sanacja*[113] group and the former opposition parties soon deteriorated to the extent that some of the opposition leaders were imprisoned and others had to leave the country for varying periods of time.

The *Sanacja* firmly entrenched itself as the government, and did not yield even with the enactment of a new constitution in 1935. Oddly, however, after Pilsudski's death the *Sanacja* did acquire many of the *Endecja's* nationalist attitudes and even adopted some of their policies. This supposed shift in political orientation, served to obscure many of the most pressing internal political issues, and to ameliorate increasing nationalistic sentiments among the ethnically Polish segment of the population.

The ethnic minority groups were subjected to increased pressure for assimilation and many were thereby alienated. The Zionist Jewish groups, the Ukrainian nationalists, and the Germans, were subjected to many political pressures - a situation bearing a remarkable resemblance to the Polish experience of the *Kulturkampf*.

This turn inward, on its own citizens, by the post-Pilsudski governments, was reactionary and not based on any rational approach to internal affairs. It was rather an act of frustration because of the increasing ineffectiveness

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[112] Janusz Radziwill, "Poland Since the Great War", The Slavonic Review. vol. XII, No. 34, 1933, pp.299.
[113] *Sanacja* - from the Latin *Sanatio* - "to heal".

of its foreign policy as planned and dictated by Foreign Minister Jozef Beck. Under his guidance Poland entered into impossible military pacts with Britain and France and alienated itself from its most powerful neighbours, Germany and the Soviet Union. When these came to an understanding, Poland was placed at their mercy - something which those powers possessed frightfully little of!

Even in its last days, in September of 1939, the *Sanacja* government remained true to its distant allies and ordered the military to fight what was to have been a two week defensive action which would allow the Allies time to mobilize. Even more remarkably, the Polish Air Force under direct orders from the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Marshall Rydz-Smigly, was prevented from bombing sites within Germany, because of a British request that this not be done lest it serve to antagonize the enemy! The Polish Second Republic died as it had lived - torn apart internally by many tendencies, sentiments, and forces. It became a victim either of its own vanity or of its misguided attempts to find security in the company of more powerful, yet more distant states.

Not surprisingly, there were many who never expected it to survive as long as it did - and indeed considering the stature and position of some of these, openly hostile individuals, it is amazing that the state existed for even twenty-one years. Norman Davies has compiled some of their remarks and made the observation that "[r]arely, if ever,

has a newly independent country been subjected to such eloquent and gratuitous abuse.[114]"

On September 17, 1939, facing defeat at the hands of the German and the Soviet Armies, the Polish Government left Polish soil and fled to Rumania, and from there to France, where a new Government-in Exile was created.

D. Summary

In 1918, when Poland reappeared as an independent state, all strata of the society had achieved some degree of national consciousness. The *Szlachta*, decimated by successive revolts and reprisals, had lost its position of cultural ascendancy over the peasant and working classes. From the time of the suppression of the Uprising of January, 1863 until the attainment of independence, representatives

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[114]Davies, 1982, vol. II, op.cit., p.393.
The remarks are listed as follows:
Molotov called it 'the monstrous bastard of the Peace of Versailles'. Stalin called it 'pardon the expression, a state'. J. M. Keynes,..., called it 'an economic impossibility whose only industry is Jew-baiting'. Lewis Namier called it 'pathological'. E. H. Carr called it 'a farce'. David Lloyd George talked of 'a historic failure', which had 'won her freedom not by her own exertions but by the blood of others', and of a country which 'imposed on other nations the very tyranny' which it had endured itself for years. 'Poland', he said, was drunk with the new wine of liberty supplied to her by the Allies',... In 1919 , Lloyd George was reported as saying that he would no more give Upper Silesia to Poland 'than he would give a clock to a monkey'. In 1939, he announced that Poland had 'deserved its fate'....
[See: Davies, 1982, vol. II, op.cit., p.393.]

from all classes were involved, as best they could be, in the determination of cultural/political issues.

Unfortunately, a stable democratic system never evolved in the new republic. In fact, Polish politics once again came to be dominated by the *Szlachta* - albeit in a new form - in the guise of the intelligentsia and "military class". Conflict, reminiscent of the conditions under which the original *Rzeczpospolita* collapsed, threatened, and eventually destroyed, the Sejmocratic (parliamentary democratic) system.

As a consequence of this querulous behaviour of the politicians and other leading personalities, large groups within the society were alienated. The National Minorities and the "lower orders", particularly the peasants, experienced the greatest difficulties, and were often discriminated against.

After the passing of Marshall Jozef Pilsudski, who was keenly aware of this situation, his successors, as well as their political opponents, simply continued to use the "opposition tactics" to which they were so well accustomed. In doing so they stifled, or minimized, many of the constructive tendencies which might have been successful in repairing some of the social/cultural damage.

The ruinous nature of the bickering between the Pilsudski-ite and the Dmowski-ite camps was most evident in the wars, coups, assassinations and other violent activities. Curiously however, the paradoxical compromises

of, and between, these two camps, were equally destructive in that they created dilemmas instead of resolving issues. Pilsudski's federalist aspirations, and Dmowski's efforts toward expansion of an ethnically Polish state westward at Germany's expense, were both eventually suspended, but not before the external situation became markedly less advantageous.

Essentially, the Polish leading classes, having had their efforts in the field of international diplomacy thwarted, turned their attention inward. Aspects of the "federalist-nationalist controversy" reappeared in conflicts over internal policy. The nationalists strove toward assimilating the ethnic minorities while the federalists insisted on the creation of some type of multicultural state. The result was socio-cultural chaos.

Additional elements either affected the situation immediately, or crept into it at various particularly inopportune moments. The country had been ravaged by at least six years of war, its industries had suffered critical set backs, and agricultural production was seriously reduced at the time of its assertion of independence. Inflation, the loss of foreign markets because of blockades, and the world-wide recession of the late 1920's and early 1930's compounded the socio-economic problems already experienced within the state. The agricultural sector, which provided the economic base for the country, was most severely affected - and since the majority of the population were

employed in this area[115] the nation felt the social impact most acutely.

The situation was obviously not healthy. The national economy suffered and so did the people. There were threats, protests, and a few isolated cases of riots and even of terrorist activity, but the anticipated civil war never occurred.[116] In fact, the last two to three years of the existence of the Republic were even hopeful. There was something of an economic resurgence and a certain degree of stability in the political arena was attained. This was the "calm before the storm" that was to envelope Europe for five and one half years following the invasion of Poland in September of 1939 - World War II.

It must be pointed out to all of the critics of the Polish state of the inter-war years, that it took two of the world's most powerful nations to bring it down, and a nearly incredible quantity of men and materiel to keep it down!

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[115] Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy, 1935. op.cit., p. 474.
[116] Olga Narkiewicz, The Green Flag: Polish Populist Politics 1867 -1970. London: Croom Helm , 1976, pp.229-230.

IV. EDUCATION IN INTER-WAR POLAND

> It is one of the minor ironies of Poland's renewed existence, that she is fated to organize her public life in a period of world-wide ferment, in which all established traditions and recognized certainties of political and social thought and practice are called into question. Education is a domain in which this unsettlement and restlessness are particularly pronounced. The post-war world is fairly swarming with projects and counter-projects of most thorough-going reforms with regard to the structure of the school-system, the subject-matter of teaching, and the pedagogical methods. No wonder, then, that Polish education found it impossible to escape a vortex of constant changes.[117]

The foregoing statement, written by Roman Dyboski some fourteen years after Poland regained her independence, was penned during the initial moments of a major reform of the system of education - the Jedrzejewicz Reforms of 1932. It seems that Dyboski was attempting to develop a rationalization for what he, and others, perceived to be a lack of stability or even direction in the Polish educational system of the early Inter-War years. This premature *apologia*, coupled with the oppositionist attacks on the system by numerous political, ethnic and nationalist, and even class rivals, served to undermine the status of the Polish system in world opinion. It did so then and continues to do so even now.

The "vortex" which the educational system "found impossible to escape" was not one of "constant changes" as Dyboski maintains. It was rather, a motion or rotation caused by forces emanating from a government and a state

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[117]Roman Dyboski, Poland. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1933, p.273.

fraught with divergent internal political tendencies yet intent on the cultivation of universally favourable world opinion. Like the ancient Lithuanian and Slav god *Swiatowit*[118] Inter-War Poland always had another face to present to the world.[119] Yet the rate of this face-changing was more like the whirling of a top than a vortex. The desire to satisfy too many demands in too short a time resulted in the creation of a system which satisfied no one completely - and evidently, some far less than others.

Herein lies the major obstacle to objective analysis of the educational system. It was popularly labelled as being unsatisfactory even before objective analysis could be carried out. Most researchers have therefore, either for ideological reasons or to ameliorate public or world opinion, subjected the system to a form of critical analysis which attempts to determine whether it was as efficient as it could possibly have been. The answer has almost always been negative, but the myriad criticisms of the system arising from this response range from mild deprecation to blanket condemnation. This indicates that the validity of this approach is seriously questionable.

It is obvious that no one was completely happy with the education system, but listing the staggering number of reasons for this dissatisfaction does not facilitate any attempt to understand or to evaluate its philosophic and

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[118]A Lithuanian and Slav deity with four faces.
[119]In a different analogy or metaphor the *Catastrophist* poet Wladyslaw Sebylla (1902-1941) saw the reborn Poland as a *Swiatowit* facing four hostile sides.

structural dynamics. Another approach must be taken and other questions must be asked.

We must attempt to understand why the creators of the Inter-War system of education adopted the various educational philosophies which they held, and why they proceded in the fashion in which they did, both in the parliament and in public. The educational philosophies, the shapes of the curricula, and even the shape given to the "educational pyramid" all were determined within the perceptions of reality of the various people in positions of power. It is imperative therefore that we know what those perceptions were and how they affected the educationists' views not only in the shaping of their "ideal" system but also the version which they were finally willing to accept. It is only after all of this has been determined that we can begin a second level of analysis or evaluation dealing mainly with determination of the degree to which the concrete objectives set by these people were actually attained. If we know what their goals and objectives were and also what the results were we can begin to approximate to what degree the system was a success or a failure. We can also begin to speculate on whether the system was "inadequate" for certain societal groups or classes, or if it was purposely maintained at an inadequate or low level for the whole country in order to free-up funds for government programs in certain other areas (eg. national defense, or the military) as has occasionally been charged.

A complete or exhaustive analysis of this type would be impossible to carry out within this study. Indeed, this would have to be a major project in itself. It would be more expedient, therefore, to limit this section to a description of the educational situation while indicating the observable tendencies toward certain goals and objectives. A description of the systems proposed by the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education[120] and a discussion of the various "camps" in that ministry and in the *Sejm* will be included. Also, a compendium of the major pieces of education legislation passed in Inter-War Poland, and descriptions of the school systems along with various statistics and data, should then round out a brief overview of developments in Polish education.

A. The Origins: Theory, Ideology, and Action

The expansion of public education in the final years of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has been attributed to the efforts of Stanislaw Konarski and those individuals like Kollataj, Massalski, and Czartoryski who worked within the ranks of the National Commission of Education. The philosophies of education espoused by these men demonstrated the influence of the ideas of Komensky (Comenius), Locke, and Rousseau, but they also retained notions peculiar to the

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[120] *Ministerstwo Wyznan Religijnych i Oswiecenia Publicznego*, most often referred to as simply the MWRiOP.

world-view of the *Szlachta*, particularly their views about the ideal shape of the society.

These philosophical attitudes and perspectives changed as the *Szlachta* lost their state, and consequently numerous rights and considerable power. When their *estate* became seriously threatened as a result of the multitude of inauspicious events following the Partitions, they (the *Szlachta*) started to adjust their philosophies to include a broader national view.

The major turning-point was the unsuccessful Uprising of 1863, after which an attitude of Positivism or Organic work was adopted. From that time forward, the *Szlachta* generally tended to see considerably more value in the education of the lower orders - the peasants and the Jews. Unfortunately, decisions regarding the expansion or character of any system of education within the boundaries of the former Commonwealth were made by representatives of the occupying powers and not directly by the Polish upper classes.

The three partitioning powers adopted radically different attitudes toward the inhabitants of the lands of the former Commonwealth and the resultant developments in the field of public education reflected these. The Austrians at first tried to implement a policy of Germanization, but in 1866 they started to permit the establishment of schools and even school systems where the languages of instruction

were either Polish or Ukrainian.[121] The policy in this zone was one of *laissez faire* in most matters which did not directly affect the governance and stability of the Empire. For the most part the Polish and Ukrainian nationalist groups as well as the *Szlachta* and peasant classes, were left to their own, often contradictory or antagonistic, devices.

The results, of course, were as dismal as might be expected from a situation such as this. Despite the fact that a network of secondary schools, two universities, one at Krakow and the other at Lwow, and even a technical college (Lwow) were open and functioning, the general level of elementary education among the population was comparatively low. Compulsory education legislation enacted in May, 1895 [122] was very poorly enforced, and this in turn, led to the high illiteracy rate of 40% [123] extant in 1918.

The situations in the Russian and Prussian sectors, where the severest repression of Polish language, culture, and nationalism were the official policies, differed very dramatically. The Prussians instituted a policy of Germanization through education while the Russians adopted one of Russification through the enforcement of ignorance - or of "actively not expanding education." The Russian

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[121]Murray, Michael, (Ed.). Poland's Progress: 1919 - 1939. London: Orbis (London) Ltd., 1944, p.113.
See also: Pecherski and Swiatek, op.cit., pp.17-18. This source cites the Austrian regulation of May 14, 1869 as the initial legislation in this area.
[122]ibid., p.21.
[123]ibid., p.25.

attitude is well exemplified in a remark attributed to the prominent 19th century Russian liberal-turned-conservative writer, Mikhail Katkov. He said that, "We [Russians] must bring Poland down to the Russian level of ignorance.," notwithstanding the fact that this attitude did nothing to improve the world opinion of his beloved Russian Empire.

The Russians set about their purpose with considerable zeal, closing the Universities of Wilno and Warsaw in 1831, destroying Massalski's system of peasant elementary (parish) schools in Lithuania, and otherwise converting the existing schools into instruments of Russification. The educational needs of the rural areas were also, for the most part, wholly neglected over the 120 years of the Partitions. It was discovered, after 1921, that in this area, on the average, over 50% of the population over ten years of age was illiterate[124], and that in some regions this rate increased to 75% and 80%.

No organized elementary school system was in existence, no regional education legislation of any consequence had been enacted (let alone implemented), and, not surprisingly, many villages did not have established schools. Simply stated, the new Polish state would have to "start from scratch" in many regions of the former Russian zone.

The Prussians, on the other hand, applied their energies not to the suppression of education but to the expansion and universalization of it. Compulsory schooling

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[124]ibid., p.25.

was legislated as early as the Ordinance of December 11, 1845 and attendance at the *volkschulen* or primary schools was strictly enforced. Parents who refused to send their children to school were fined by the school authorities[125].

Children were required to attend the 8-year *volkschul*, in which the language of instruction was primarily German for all subjects except religious education. When some school inspectors, under pressure from the HKT Society,[126] attempted to Germanize this subject area too the indignation of the public in the Polish sector was aroused. The Wreschen incident, a near riot, occurred in 1901, and school strikes were precipitated in the Posen area in 1906. Even Henryk Sienkiewicz, the Nobel prize-winning author, wrote an open letter to Kaiser Wilhelm II protesting the forcible Germanization of Polish pupils.

The Prussians relented somewhat as support for the HKT Society declined among deputies to the Prussian *Reichstag*. Nevertheless, the policy of Germanization through education remained intact, with the Prussian authorities even going to the extent of prosecuting those instructors who operated clandestine Polish schools. This persecution, ironically, was beneficial to the newly independent Polish state.

It was discovered, in 1918, that illiteracy was almost non-existent in the former Prussian sector, and that a

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[125]ibid., p.22.

[126]The acronym *HKT* is actually made up of the first letters of the last names of the three men who gave this group of deputies its "ideological" inspiration: F. Hansemann, H. Kennemann, and H. Tiedemann.

school system, complete with buildings was already in existence there. The major problems were, however, that the vast majority of teachers were Germans whose services were neither required nor offered, and that there were very few qualified Polish teachers available. There also was an acute shortage of Polish textbooks[127]. In addition, an unexpected and curious problem became evident very quickly - much of the population was literate in Polish only as written or printed in the old German *schrift*[128]. The new Polish government discovered that this seemingly insignificant phenomenon did in fact cause some communication problems, particularly in the rural areas and areas where Germanization of the Polish language was most advanced.

It should be apparent that the condition or state of the education systems and institutions as they existed in the various zones of Partition were radically different. The devastation of the wars, combined with the loss of teaching personnel (some were victims of the hostilities, others were with the military) further undermined this condition. The integration of these areas into one cohesive system of education would therefore be extremely difficult.

One should also keep in mind that aside from considerations of building requirements, materiel of other sorts, and even manpower, the educational situations of the

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[127]The Prussian authorities did not permit publication of Polish textbooks and confiscated those which were found in the clandestine schools.

[128]This style of writing or lettering was replaced by a modern script in the 1930's in Germany.

three zones "bred" very different attitudes toward state-controlled or public education. The people inhabiting the former Prussian zone and to some extent also those in the former Austrian territories, had already accepted public education to be an intrinsic element of their society. Many of the inhabitants of the former Russian zone; central and eastern Poland, parts of Lithuania, Byelorussia,and northern Ukraine, had not yet experienced the phenomenon or had only little exposure to it, and therefore they were often unwilling or unable to see the *necessity* of public schooling.

The attendance rates in these territories, and particularly in the border-lands, were always below the national average. In 1928, eight years after hostilities had ceased, fewer than 75% of school-age children, in these areas, attended school. Roman Dyboski claims that this was because, "Russian rule had established no ... tradition [of school attendance]."[129]

We can see therefore, that the task of creating a modern system of education in newly independent Poland, was a formidable one. Not only were logistical-administrative problems and divergent philosophical-curricular considerations to be encountered but also a large proportion of the population had to be convinced of the value of this entire venture. Given such circumstances, it becomes apparent that any rapid advancement or progress could occur

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[129]Dyboski, 1933, op.cit., p.278.

only if "interventionist" or perhaps even despotic pressure facilitated it. There are indications, or more accurately, complaints to the effect that this had actually happened, but after closer scrutiny it becomes apparent that there is no definitive evidence to support these contentions.

On occassion, individuals possessing either strong personalities or considerable political, if not actually popular, support headed the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education, and provided it with a certain amount of direction. However, their ideological control, which was strongest at the uppermost levels of the heirarchy, usually dissipated before it could reach the lowest levels. Legislation was enacted, philosophies were adopted, but the lowest levels making up most of the mass of the growing "monolith" were only slightly affected. The educational "monolith" therefore seemed to be in a state of constant stress.

There were precious few "heroes" waiting to remedy this situation, and those who did step forward to take control were almost always heavily criticised for the various decisions which they made while "in office". Only one man, Ksawery Prauss (1874-1925), the first Minister of Education, has been spared much of this. It may be that historians take into consideration the overwhelming responsibility of his position in those early days of independence, or perhaps they are simply reluctant to say more because of the fact that his great devotion to education and to the Polish cause

were well known - nearly legendary. Prauss, it must be noted, was Jozef Pilsudski's friend and co-conspirator. He had, along with Pilsudski, been a member of the *P.P.S. - Frakcja Rewolucyjna*[130] and an active revolutionary.[131] He was also a middle school teacher with unquestionable commitment to the profession. His expertise in the area was recognized even before his involvement in politics, and certainly long before he joined Pilsudski's Polish Legions.

Ironically, it was his function as a Commissar in these military Legions that caused him to do his most outstanding work in the establishment of a Polish system of education. In 1915 he organized the Piotrkow Central School Bureau (*Centralne Biuro Szkolne*) which was the first precursor of the MWRiOP. One year later he organized the primary school teachers' convention in Radom. This resulted is the establishment of one of the more powerful teachers' associations to function in Inter-War Poland. He also published his ideas for a program of universal primary education in 1917.

This activity, albeit still somewhat conspiratorial, enabled Prauss to be among the leaders in the field of

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[130]Polish Socialist Party - Revolutionary Fraction. This party, once the "fighting arm" of the P.P.S., was later to become the object of derogatory nicknames like P.P.S.-Frak (*Frak* - 'tail coat', referring to an ambition for office or position) uttered by anti-Pilsudski-ite politicians.

[131]See: Jedrzejewicz, Waclaw, Jozef Pilsudski, 1867-1935: Zyciorys . Londyn: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1986, pp. 23-24.
For a short biographical outline see also:
Lugowski, Bronislaw and Feliks Araszkiewicz, Postepowa Mysl Oswiatowa w Polsce w Latach 1918-1939. Wroclaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1972, pp. 523-524.

education when independence appeared to be imminent. As it became increasingly apparent that some form of Polish state was to reappear educators and other interested persons undertook the immense project of preparing the bases for a new system of education. In 1917-1918 a convention of Polish teachers from the Russian and Austrian sectors worked through a scheme for consolidation of the "Polish educational apparatus". Ksawery Prauss's proposals as accepted by the Pedagogical Commission (*Komisja Pedagogiczna*) located in Warsaw in 1917 were approved.

The Prauss Proposals

The Pedagogical Commission of the Polish Teachers' Association (*Stowarzyszenie Nauczycielstwa Polskiego*) was called into being in 1914. Its unstated, but none-the-less evident, purpose was the continuation of the work begun by the editors of, and contributors to, the "progressive" educational publication *Nowe Tory* (New Tracks)[132]. This periodical was the medium through which ideas about the modernization of education in Poland were transmitted until the commission was created.

The Pedagogical Commission met regularly, and in 1915 it published its scheme for the organization of a Polish system of education. The members of the Commission felt that ideally a seven year common school (*szkola powszechna*),

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[132] Nowe Tory, published by the *Polski Zwiazek Nauczycielski* (Polish Teachers' Union), first appeared in 1906.

which would become the basis for either a four year general middle school or a four year middle vocational level, should be created. It was also noted that the common school should be of the same calibre or level regardless of location, i.e. it should be the same in the rural and in the urban areas. This "opinion" was the result of considerable discussion and polemic, and was received with even more. Indeed, the whole climate in which the Commission operated was one of "sharp polemic and discussion."[133]

Into this controversy walked Ksawery Prauss with his ideas about the structure of a Polish system. He indicated that the Commission's proposals for a free and universal common primary school system were theoretically quite acceptable, but that they could never be practically implemented in Poland until full independence was gained. His alternate, if not actually "counter-" proposal was that a compulsory system with a five-year school, ideally run by two teachers in the rural areas and by five teachers in the urban areas (i.e. - two-form rural vs. five-form urban) be established. He also indicated that children from the wealthier (*zamozniejsze*) classes should attend private schools which were recipients of better financial support, and were staffed by better trained teachers. This was to be done so as not to cause difficulties for a "public" system which could not hope for good funding.

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[133]Bromberek, Benon, Zasady Organizacyjne i Programowe Studiow Nauczycielskich w Polsce: Lata 1918-1932. Poznan: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1964, p.18.

It was also his observation that children from the rural areas live in environments less conducive to intellectual development. For this reason, he rationalized that mainly vocational schools should be established in the rural areas, or at best three-year general elementary schools which could be entered after completion of the primary or common school program of studies. It should be noted that these programs of studies were also to be different from those implemented in the urban areas.[134]

While Prauss radically departed from the homogeneous 'ideal' proposed by the Pedagogical Commission, he also emphatically stated that the more "realistic" or practical system which he was proposing was only the minimum which could be accepted. This caused some confusion or disorientation among educationists[135] and may have actually permitted the more conservative elements to gain momentum in pressing their demands.

Inspite of the narrower vision of Prauss's proposals of 1917, it must be pointed out that they were of vital importance. In fact, they were a watershed in the development of a Polish system because they provided the first solid foundation upon which a structure could be

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[134]Bromberek, ibid., pp.27-30.

[135]Marian Falski, as quoted by Lugowski and Araszkiewicz (op.cit., p.XIV.), claims that Prauss introduced this disorientation with his proposals of 1917, and that this was to have a lasting effect on educational planning and even the shape of the system throughout the whole of the Inter-War period. It must be noted however, that Falski who was also a noted educator and organizer, and member of the P.P.S. was a contemporaneous opponent of Prauss's policy.

built. By 1918 the international situation changed and a broader vision could be allowed. Prauss's scheme, as accepted by The Primary School Teachers' Convention of 1917, could be expanded upon.

In the last months of 1918 the Warsaw Education Office assumed the authority of a ministry of education[136] in a government of independent Poland. Ksawery Prauss, at Pilsudski's request, became the first Minister of Education.[137] Unfortunately, his term in office was only to last approximately two months.

There was however, an "atmosphere of uncommon enthusiasm and limitless hope as this new stage in the development of the Polish school began."[138] Prauss, caught up in this wave of optimism, altered his stance, and under his direction the MWRiOP developed a new program - a much more expansive version of his 1917 proposals.

The new concept envisioned the introduction of a seven-year, seven-form common school as part of a new free, compulsory, universal, and homogeneous system[139]. Eventually, this was to be expanded to include kindergarten

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[136]Dyboski, 1933, op.cit., p.272.

[137]Prauss became a minister in the Moraczewski cabinet, which was actually the second to be formed in independent Poland. The first, the Daszynski government formed in Lublin, was too radically socialist to be accepted by a majority of Poles. It had considerable regional support but not that of the entire country.

[138]*W atmosferze niebywalego entuzjazmu i bezgranicznej nadziei rozpoczyna sie nowy etap rozwoju szkoly polskiej.* Bromberek, op.cit., pp.28-29.

[139]ibid., p.29

at the earlier end and an extended primary term as well. The common school was to be uniform or homogeneous in that rural and urban educations were to be of equal quality, and that completion of the primary level program was to be the prerequisite for entry into: (a) a lower level vocational school, or (b) a general middle school, or (c) a middle level vocational school.

In keeping with its egalitarian character the new system was arranged in a vertical heirarchy so that all students could theoretically advance to the highest levels of education. After completion of the five-year general or vocational middle school they could be promoted to higher schools. The emphasis seemed to be placed on student merit rather than on social status or other leverage devices.

Even in the area of curriculum Prauss's new system showed considerable evidence of progressive thought. The program of studies emphasized those subjects that would enable the students to develop independent thought and action, a good work ethic, and of course, a sense of nationalism through knowledge of their country and the practice of good citizenship.[140] This was, as Benon Bromberek writes, "a multifaceted, rich, and progressive [program]."[141] Teacher-training and extensive -upgrading programs were also envisioned, because the demand for qualified teachers was obviously soon to skyrocket.

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[140] ibid., p.31.
[141] ibid..

The plans did not even stop at reforming and building-up the school system, but also included programs for adult education, notably plans to combat adult illiteracy. Interestingly, the proposals show a rather unique approach to this particular aspect in that the government would only shoulder the financial responsibility until such time as it became apparent that private organizations would be able to take this on. The responsibility for the programs would then be turned over to these private groups.

In keeping with his stated egalitarian and democratic objectives Prauss announced that the entire nation, and especially the teachers, would be permitted to take part in the process of drafting new statutes and regulations concerning education.[142] This promise was somewhat premature however, as Prauss had to step down before his program could be fully implemented.

During his two months in office he did a tremendous amount of work, drafted numerous essential or basic decrees (eg. The Decree on Obligatory School Attendance , dated February 7, 1919, and the Decree on Training of Teachers , dated February 7,1919), and most importantly he put forward his plans for the proposed system of education. Unfortunately however, he was forced to resign before he could set his plan into "irreversible" motion. This situation permitted other, often more conservative

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[142] ibid..

individuals or those promoting various partisan approaches, to introduce alternative proposals.

Professor Jan Kasprowicz who succeeded Prauss as Minister of Education was at first inclined to continue with the same line (as Prauss), but gradually he adopted a markedly more conservative approach. Initially he attempted to follow-through with Prauss's plans by permitting input from all levels of the society. He even participated in the famous Teachers' Parliament (*Sejm Nauczycielski*) (1919) [143] which adopted, and expanded upon, Prauss's proposals.

In an apparent "about-face" Kasprowicz rejected the recommendations of the Teachers' Parliament and those of the Government Pedagogical Commission of January, 1919[144] and

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[143]The *Sejm Pedagogiczny* was a general pedagogical convention held in Warsaw in 1919. Over 800 delegates from all manner of teachers' organizations and all levels of schools were in attendance. Ksawery Prauss and Prof. Kasprowicz, among other notable educationists, were active participants.
See: Bromberek, ibid., pp.32-33.

[144]The Government Pedagogical Commission headed by Ksawery Prauss and composed of 29 teachers and civil servants met on January 7th and 8th, 1919. Based on its deliberations two documents were published, The Educational Program of the MWRiOP and A Proposal for a Regulation Concerning the Levels of Schools and the Relation of These to Each Other. The Commission also recommended that Prauss's system be adopted, but that alternate school-types should be tolerated (provided that they allow students easy integration into the recommended type of schools) until such time as it is feasible to phase them out.

The school system proposed by the Commission was accepted by the P.P.S., The Polish Populist Party - Liberation (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe or P.S.L. - Wyzwolenie*), The P.S.L.- Left (*P.S.L.- Lewica*), the P.S.L.- Piast, The National Workers' Union, some "Centre" parties, and the "progressive" *Inteligencja*. Even the National Democratic Party didn't overtly oppose the proposed system.
See: Araszkiewicz, Feliks, Szkola Srednia Ogolnoksztalcaca w Polsce w latach 1918-1932. Wroclaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1972, pp.22-25.

set about implementing the less egalitarian (some have charged: anti-democratic and elitist) 1917 proposals of Tadeusz Lopuszanski. These were based on a more conservative outlook and influenced by the British style of democracy which encourages elitism of various types.

Lopuszanski's system probably borrowed some ideas from the British public school system, most notably the practice of "streaming" at approximately age ten or eleven into academic and non-academic programs. His rationale was that this would provide for academic excellence and a more effective use of public funds. In defense of this notion of effectiveness, he and others, cited the dismal financial condition of the still-evolving state, and emphatically stated that pragmatic considerations must prevail over unrealistic desires for some more egalitarian system.

The situation was further confounded by the clamorous entry of the Roman Catholic Church into the debates over the character of the school system.[145] The Christian Democratic

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[145]The role of the Roman Catholic Church in the establishment of a system of formal public education in Inter-war Poland is not clearly defined. This may be because post-war Marxist writers down-played the Church's importance. It is also possible that since the founders of the system were mostly secularists they too relegated the Church's role to one of lesser importance.

Representatives of the Church were vocal enough to ensure that religious instruction became a mandatory subject, and that priests rather than lay teachers became the instructors. The Roman Catholics also generally approved of similar provisions for members of other faiths. In other words, the Catholic Church was involved to the extent that it demanded the inclusion of religious instruction and it even strove to provide it in the schools. It is unclear, however, whether this Church played any other major role.

We do know that some Orders of the Catholic Church like the Piarists, Jesuits, and Basilians had been involved in

wing of the National Democratic Party took up the anti-secularist cause of the Church[146] and brought the debate solidly into the political arena. A tempest then began to rage, not so much over the structure of the system, but rather over the degree of importance afforded to religious instruction in the schools. In fact, progress toward the establishment of a truly egalitarian and democratic system was way-laid or diverted by this turmoil which caused Prauss's proposals to be identified with the work of radical socialist elements. As a result of the Polish-Soviet conflict these groups had become in their turn, identified with Bolshevism, and were therefore rapidly becoming less and less acceptable. The political situation in the pre-constitutional period (before 1921) was becoming increasingly polarized and this, given the large number of centrist parties and groups, signalled an imminent shift in general national orientation to the political right (since the left had become less acceptable). The process of creating a national system of education could not escape the

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[145](cont'd) education directly for centuries, and that they continued to offer these services. We cannot, however, say with any certainty that the Church seriously entertained any notions of greater involvement in the "public" system.

Perhaps another source of the confusion or lack of clarity about this issue stems from the identification of Catholicism with Polish nationalism. The two appear to be "inseperable" causes - especially because of the era of romanticism with its visions of Polish messianism and later because of the manifestations of the fervently religious and nationalistic tendencies of the peasants. However, neither of these phenomena indicate any clear definitions for the role of the Church. This would certainly be an area worthy of further study.

[146]ibid., pp.24-25.

effects of this shift.

This "flip-flop" in proposals for the shape of the character of the new Polish system echoed Prauss's opinions of 1917, when he dismissed the scheme of the Pedagogical Commission of 1915 as impractical. It was also very typical of the Polish way of dichotomizing or polarizing every issue by counter-posing solutions from either the "idealist" or the "realist" perspectives. This stilted approach, which might even be taken for some form of dialectic, was to plague Polish educators throughout the duration of the Second Republic.

Aside from the debilitating effects of ideological conflicts the new system was also subjected to the negative effects of occassionally violent struggles for the maintenance of the rights, and implementation of demands, of powerful minority groups.[147] These pressures, combined with an equally powerful Polish nationalist backlash, altered and to some extent further imbalanced opinion as to the shape and character of the education system.

Social-ideological pressures, religious considerations and nationalism all affected the outcome of the plans for the system, and they would also affect its implementation. The results would obviously be unsatisfactory to many, and they in turn would generate demands for reforms. As governments and international or world opinion changed,

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[147] See: Mauersberg. op.cit.. for an excellent discussion of the education (policies, systems, statistics, etc.) of minority groups living in Inter-War Poland.

various attempts were made to "correct" or improve the system. The list of proposed reforms is very nearly astounding!

Interestingly, the reforms undertaken between 1915 and 1929 can all be classified as resultant from two major philosophical-ideological currents; one "progressive-social" and the other "national".[148] The "progressive-social" current has as its main focus the reform and democraticization of society, and generally may be recognized in the efforts of the socialists and to a great extent also those of the peasants. The demarcation between the "progressive-social" and the "national" current is somewhat obscured however by the insistence of the peasants that education must have a religious dimension. On the one hand the peasants demonstrate a desire for an egalitarian and democratic system, but on the other they insist that it must reflect their religious nature regardless of the wishes of others. The Roman Catholic aspect is also an integral part of the educational conceptions of the nationalists whose ideas form the basis of the "national" current.

After 1929 and up to 1935 approximately,[149] a third variant, perhaps a synthesis of the two previous currents, emerged. The product of an awkward compromise, the new current emphasized the training and development of Polish *citizens* and found expression in the "New Pedagogy" of

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[148]Pohoska, Hanna, "Les Grands Courants D'Opinion." In, Pologne, 1919-1939: Vie Intellectuelle et Artistique. vol. III, Neuchatel: Editions de la Baconniere, 1947, pp.147-150.

[149]ibid..

Slawomir Czerwinski, Minister of Education (ca. 1929-1931). The "Pegagogy" had both social reform and nationalism as its objectives, but was actually incapable of satisfying either. Its purpose could therefore only be to initiate orientation of the system toward production of productive and loyal citizens (of the state). Its critics, however, saw in it the first steps toward the Fascisization of the Polish state.

These same critics (virtually all writers permitted to publish material in the People's Republic of Poland) maintain that the "New Pedagogy" and especially the Jedrzejewicz Reforms of 1932 created the conditions required for the "militarization" of education experienced between 1935 and 1939. Also at least one writer living in exile[150] explained that from 1935 onward the feeling that war was inevitable permeated education. The resultant expansion of the Scouting movement[151] and of other para-military youth organizations, notably the *Strzelcy*[152], paralleled the increased emphasis on citizenship and civic duty as aspects

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[150]Pohoska. ibid..

[151]Part of the world-wide Boy Scouts movement founded by Lord Baden-Powell. "Its aim is to develop good citizenship among boys by forming their character - training them in habits of observation, obedience, and self-reliance inculcating loyalty and thoughtfulness for others - teaching them services useful to the public and handicrafts useful to themselves - promoting their physical development and their hygiene."(Pears Cyclopaedia, Sixty-first edition, n.d., p.644.)

[152]The *Strzelcy* (Soldiers or Marksmen) was a paramilitary youth organization with some degree of association with the military. In many ways it could be comparable to the Military Cadet Organization in existence in Canada today.

Unjustifiably, post-World War II Polish writers have often compared the non-partisan *Strzelcy* to the N.S.D.A.P. *Hitler Jugend* of Nazi Germany.

of nationalism in public education.[153] Many critics of the educational system of Inter-War Poland point to these events or phenomena as evidence of a shift toward Fascism. They fail to explain, however, that Pilsudski's death in 1935, and the growth of Nazism in Germany, in combination with other factors, all seemed to underline the dangerous position in which Poland was finding itself. The "man-in-the-street" felt that war was inevitable, and his rhetoric as well as his behaviour reflected this. It was inevitable that education should do so as well!

Naturally, the character of the educational system was always shaped, to some extent, by political "moods" or trends. As these changed, calls for reforms of the educational system also arose. The system based on the Prauss-Lopuszanski initiatives fell out of favour quickly after the boundaries of the Polish state were stabilized in 1921. The tendency toward the adoption of a more nationalist focus continued and was exemplified by the reform proposals of Bogdan Nawroczynski in 1923, Wojciech Gorski in 1924, and especially those of Stanislaw Grabski in 1925.

A swing back toward a more "progressive-social" concept elicited Wladyslaw Radwan's proposals of 1925, but these were countered by Jaxa-Bykowski's nationalist ideas in 1927.

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[153] ibid..
The Boy Scouts, and particularly the *Strzelcy*, strongly promoted participation in competitive sports, like soccer, volleyball etc.. This was very much in keeping with the ideas inherent in the international phenomenon of "progressive" education , and the 'physical education movement'. In many instances the sports activities added a hitherto unknown dimension to village (rural) life.

In 1928 the Club of Parliamentarians - *Wyzwolenie* (Liberation) again called for a return to progressive-social "ideals".

In 1932 Janusz Jedrzejewicz brought in his monumental reform of the system, but it, like its little known predecessor of 1926, was more of a compromise between the two camps than an expression of the desires of one or the other. The focus shifted farther toward creation of "good citizens". Only two other serious efforts to implement change followed this one. The first in 1933, was Wladyslaw Spasowski's proposal, and the last, Rafal Praski's (pseudonym of Marian Falski) progressivist effort of 1936[154]. Their impact on the system was only minimal, and the Jedrzejewicz system was to remain the "ideal" until the last days of World War II. In truth, this system was never fully implemented, and many of its original goals were altered during its duration.

B. Education Legislation and The School Systems

One of the first and most important pieces of education legislation enacted in Inter-War Poland was the Decree on Obligatory School Attendance, dated February 7, 1919[155]. This provided the vehicle by which Ksawery Prauss, who was then the Minister of Education, was to bring in his system

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[154]For a brief description of many of these proposals see: Bromberek, op.cit., pp.3-59.
[155]MWRiOP, Dekret: O Obowiazku Szkolnym. In, Pecherski and Swiatek, op.cit., pp.146-150.

based on the "free, compulsory, and universal" seven-year common school concept. This decree did in fact set the direction for all future education legislation in that it entrenched the notion of compulsory attendance for children between the ages of 7 and 14 years, and in doing so it further entrenched the concept of a seven-year common school.

Once this "precedent legislation" was set into place it became something of an *idee fixe* among educationists. Not surprisingly, opponents of the notion found ingenious ways to circumvent it. Lopuszanski and others of the same "mind-set" perverted this seven-year scheme into a stratified arrangement of common schools teaching to 4-, 5-, 6- or 7-*form* levels. [156] This permitted the fracture of the system into "lower level" (4-, 5-, 6-form) schools for the rural areas, and "higher level" (7-grade, 7-form) schools for the urban areas.

The curricular emphasis in the higher level schools was broader or more comprehensive in that the three *echelons* of the curriculum were taught throughout the seven forms. *Echelon* #1, the elementary "cycle" of general development, was emphasized in the first four years; *echelon* #2, which was wider and deeper than *echelon* #1, in years 5 and 6, and; *echelon* #3 which was concerned with the development of

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[156] Silesia, which had an autonomous school system, adopted an eight-year compulsory common school scheme. Galicia, where a 6-year scheme had been established during the period of Austrian domination, was allowed to retain this wherever the inhabitants so desired.

social skills, civics, and an awareness of the economic "realities" of the state, in the seventh and final year.

Schools designated as Degree #2 taught *echelon* #1 exclusively for the first four years, and *echelons* #2 and #3 in the last three years.

The lowest level of the common schools, Degree #1, taught *echelon* #1 for the first four years and only the most important elements of *echelons* #2 and #3 in the last three years.[157] This was the type of education made available to most peasant children in Inter-War Poland.

It was felt by most of the more conservative legislators and educators that the implementation of the higher level schools, which had higher staffing and building requirements, was more justifiable for the urban areas where there were more children. In addition, it was once again explained, by some of the more paternalistic conservative spokesmen that the *melieux* of the rural children was less conducive to greater scholastic achievement.

This situation, which was obviously discriminatory and undemocratic, was vehemently opposed by many educators and politicians, but it was never remedied. Repeatedly, the "ideal" of a homogeneous and universal common school system was proclaimed unattainable (always, "for the time being") because of the "realistic" considerations of the manpower and financial requirements for its implementation.

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[157]Drobny, Wladyslaw, Pologne..., p.156.

The Constitution of 1921 failed to provide the rural population with guarantees of any rights to education of the same quality as that provided in the urban areas. In fact, clause 118 of this Constitution entrenched the notion of compulsory or obligatory attendance but reserved the right of the government to determine the "time, sphere, and method" of schooling.[158] This obviously placed the rural population in a vulnerable position in terms of public education.

Emboldened by their success in this and other arenas the nationalist-conservative elements in the government proceeded to extend and consolidate the power of the MWRiOP over the schools of the minority groups. The Bill "Including Certain Resolutions Concerning the Organization of Schools"[159] did just that by first stating that the parliament was responsible for education legislation and secondly that the state recognized the role of schools as "creators" of loyal citizens. It went on to say that students belonging to minority groups were entitled to an education which respected their heritage, but that the government would determine the criteria which would determine whether a school could be established with the

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[158]Konstitucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Art. 118. In Pecherski and Swiatek, op.cit., p.171.
Art. 119. of this Constitution established obligatory religious instruction in the schools and that it be conducted by members of religious orders.

[159]Ustawa z dnia 31 lipca 1924 roku Zawierajaca Niektore Postanowienia o Organizacji Szkolnictwa In, Pecherski and Swiatek, op.cit., pp.177-179.

minority language as the language of instruction.[160]

These "criteria" precipitated a great outcry and even violence. The government, however, relented only slightly, and minority schools were controlled "with an iron fist".

In the late-1920's the "mood" changed somewhat. Perhaps the socialists and the conservatives simply became numbed by each others rhetoric, or the muzzle placed on both camps by Pilsudski after his *coup d'etat* muffled their shrill outcries. Regardless of the reason, a desire for serious compromise arose, and in 1932 this resulted in the enactment of the The Bill Concerning the Structure of the School System - the famous Jedrzejewicz Reform.[161] This Bill promised to eliminate the potential for class conflict created by the "old" system and to establish, "a common universal foundation of seven years elementary school [sic]."[162]

As in the past, "wise men" pointed out that "[the] new system is to come into operation within a few years, but

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[160]It must be pointed out that the "official language" of the state was Polish as spoken in Great Poland (*Wielkopolska*). The process of "standardization of usage" of the language brought with it many problems even among those who felt themselves to be ethnically Polish but were speakers of one of the many dialects. The Silesians, for example, spoke a dialect which was quite different from the accepted version, but because of the autonomous status of their school system they managed to preserve its general usage. In other parts of Poland the usage of dialects was generally, but also increasingly, confined to the rural areas. In some ways this helped to further alienate the rural/agricultural population.

[161]MWRiOP, Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 1932 roku O Ustroju Szkolnictwa. In, Pecherski and Swiatek, pp.190-205.

[162]Dyboski, 1933, op.cit., p.277.

economic difficulties will probably delay, or even considerably modify, its realization."[163] In fact, a combination of economic difficulties and political interference prevented the scheme from being fully implemented. An increased emphasis on military preparations also took money and manpower away from the school system.

In retrospect it may be said that the Reform was a "last ditch effort" to correct the inequities in the system. It may perhaps be more fair or accurate to say that it was just another philosophical/ideological "shift" that never worked its way down from the top to the bottom levels. The situation in which the peasants and the minority groups found themselves was never remedied - the implementation of corrective regulations was never completed. The legal bases were established, but the implementation was fraught with so much intereference, of various kinds, that this work was only in its beginning stages when everthing "froze" in 1939.

The Structure of the System

The structural base upon which the school system was built was the free, compulsory, and "ideally" universal/homogeneous seven-year common primary school. The Jedrzejewicz Reforms provided for up to four years of *Kindergarten* and various degrees of middle and higher academic and vocational schools, all arranged in a vertically heirarchic scheme with Universities at the top.

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[163] ibid..

The common primary school was still the "core" however. This was the level which was accessible to most of the population, and, in fact, it was the level to which most of the population was restricted - for any number of reasons (many beyond the control of the school authorities or the government).

These primary schools fell into three categories[164]: level or degree #1 - consisting of four "forms" with the first lasting one year, the second also one year, the third two years, and the fourth three years - for a total of seven years; level or degree #2 - consisting of five grades of one year each, with a sixth lasting for two years; level or grade #3 - consisting of seven grades over seven years. The schools designated as "level #3" were mainly situated in the urban centres, with the two lower levels (particularly "level #1") restricted to the rural areas.

Despite the provisions enabling movement from one level to another, it was difficult for pupils to move to a higher level school without the loss of a year or more. This, and the generally poorer quality of instruction offered in the lower levels, helped to prevent movement, not just within the elementary level but, from the elementary to the secondary level. The vast majority of pupils from the rural areas never advanced to any type of secondary school.

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[164]The purpose of the Jedrzejewicz legislation was to encourage the changeover of the lower level elementary schools to the higher level, but by 1939/40 only small progress had been made.

Theoretically however, after completion of the requirements of the primary school program pupils could advance to a four-year (eight-year in the "old" system)[165] academically oriented *Gimnazjum* or middle school and on to the *Liceum* for two more years of study before proceding to one of the higher institutions. Students could also choose from middle and higher levels of vocational schools of two or four years duration. Upgrading schools were also available for those who wanted to take a different route than the one in which they had started.

Teachers' colleges, i.e. Normal schools at the secondary level, and *Pedagogia* at the higher level were among the other options available. Enrollment in these facilities increased rapidly in the 1920's, but "fell off" - actually it was severly restricted in the mid-1930's. Curiously, at a time when the student population at the elementary level was increasing rapidly, the government moved to limit the expansion of the teaching profession. Z. Kormanowa writes, "The Polish Republic began its battle for public elementary education with about 70,000 elementary school teachers, but by 1924/25 this number grew to barely 75,071, in 1928/29 it dropped to 73,407, and in the last year, 1939/40 there were barely 77,693. At the same time the

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[165]Depending on the level or degree of the elementary school attended, the pupil could either enter an "Upgrading" program, or the first year of the *gymnazjum*, or year two or three of the same middle school. Completion of the equivalency of an "eighth form" was the basis for the granting of the *Matura* (comparable perhaps to British A-Level) to the student.

number of students in the elementary schools grew from 3,208,400 in 1922 to 4,953,000 in 1938/39."[166] The government, according to Kormanowa, had obviously refused to allow the numbers of teachers to increase proportionately with the increase in the number of students.

Neither she, nor Jan Kulpa, in whose book she is quoted, cite other statistical data which might possibly indicate what the government's motives were for their seemingly incomprehensible action.[167] They do not point out, for example, that the government's budgetary alotment for education increased from a mere 40 million *zlotys*, or 5.17% of national expenditure in 1921[168] to 432 million *zlotys*, or approximately 15.2% of the total state budget, in 1938/39.[169] No explanation is given for the apparent diversion of funds from teachers' salaries to other areas of expenditure in the educational system. In fact, Kormanowa's

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[166]Z. Kormanowa quoted in:
Kulpa, Jan, Ksztalcenie Nauczycieli Szkol Powszechnych w Polsce w Latach 1918-1939. Wroclaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1963, p.154.

[167]Kulpa (p.154.) does indicate that Kormanowa's statistics may not be entirely accurate in that the number of teachers in 1921/22, according to MWRiOP statistics, was only 57,159. It is not clear however, whether this number includes teachers from Silesia which had only been incorporated into the Polish state after the plebiscites of 1921. In any event, Benon Bromberek (1964), citing Z. Kraeutler, Ed., Rocznik Pedagogiczny - 1921 (Pedagogical Yearbook 1921), Warszawa: n.p., p.527., places the number at 50,091.

[These discrepancies are significant not only in that they may indicate errors or even wilfull misrepresentation, but that so-called "primary sources", in this case government publications themselves, occassionally presented data inconsistently.]

[168]St. Karski, Poland Past and Present. Warsaw: Drukarnia Krajowa, 1927, p.40.

[169]Pologne, op.cit., p.154.

statistical "lament" is purposely left to stand in the same way that monuments or obelisks are left by modern-day Polish roadsides to commemorate atrocities committed by the Nazis. It is worth pointing out that post-war (WWII) Polish Marxist historians often resort to over-emphasizing such "condemning statistics" (which have on many occassions been taken out of context). Defenders of, or apologists for, the Inter-War system, have countered with their statistical "evidence", and the situation has often-times been thoroughly confounded as a result.

The search for definitive proof of the success or failure of the Inter-War Republic has often degenerated to an even less worthwhile search for "statistical slogans and epithets". Worse still, it has become intrinsic in the "quantitative methods" of many Polish historians, especially historians of education. It seems that most of these writers are very keen on arranging their statistical "finds" and then, most ingenuously, letting them "speak for themselves" (from within a medium of essential interpretive commentary).

In similar fashion, but hopefully without the biased commentary, the final segment of this chapter will attempt to present a statistical panorama of education in Inter-War Poland.

C. Statistics

Adult education or "Upgrading institutions" and institutions of higher learning, i.e. universities and higher technical schools, have not yet been discussed in this chapter. Since no detailed discussion of these levels of education is essential to a study of "the education of peasants in Inter-War poland" it may be appropriate therefore to limit it to a presentation of the statistical data available.

There were, in fact, many *evening courses* in existence throughout the country but the *Peoples' Universities* modelled after Danish Folk High Schools became the best known institutions of their kind.[170] In the school-year 1937/38 there were 591 of these along with 139 Peasants' and Workmens' Universities[171] which were based on similar principles. Attendance or enrollment statistics for the Peoples' Universities are difficult to determine because of the informal nature of these establishments, but this data is available for the Peasants' and Workmens' Universities for the year 1937/38. Apparently, 12,660 people enrolled in 317 courses in that year.[172]

Another *institution* which provided facilities, and indeed strongly encouraged adult educational upgrading, was

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[170]William J. Rose, in his "Polish Memoires" speaks highly of these schools. He also mentions that they were modelled on "the Danish Folk High Schools created by Grundtvig after the defeats of the sixties...."
[See: Stone, Daniel, The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975, p.129.]

[171]Murray, op.cit., p.121.

[172] ibid..

the Military. This body contributed greatly to the reduction of the national illiteracy rate, and also encouraged many adults to continue their studies after completion of their term mandatory military service. It is worth noting that the military carried on this "educational" tradition even during World War II, whenever conditions permitted.[173]

It cannot be denied, however, that the efforts of the Peoples', Peasants' and Workmens' Universities and those of the Military also, were tangential to the scheme or heirarchy of education in Poland. The Universities and higher technical schools were the pinnacle of the educational pyramid. Prior to World War I there were only two Polish University still open, the Jagiellonian in Krakow and J. Kazimierza in Lwow. Also one Politechnical Institute was open in the same city. In 1915, after the Prussian occupation of Warsaw, a University was opened there. In 1919 about a year after independence was achieved a university was established at Poznan and the Stefan Batory University of Wilno was re-opened. Several politechnical schools and other "Academies" were opened in the years immediately following the re-establishment of the Republic.

By 1922/23 there were 5 universities, 2 politechnical schools, one school of rural economy , one school of mining (engineering), one "academy" of veterinary medicine, and one

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[173][See:Drobny, Wladyslaw, Karabin i Ksiazka (Polskie Liceum w Szwajcarii 1940-1944). Warszawa: Wyd. Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1973.]
[See also:Kronika: 5ty Kresowy Baon. C.K.M.. London: n.p., 1986, pp.33-52]

"academy" of fine arts, retaining a total of 784 professors and 1336 lecturers and assistants.[174] Over the next 17 years a Catholic University at Lublin, another Academy of Fine Arts, an agricultural college, the College for Commercial Studies at Warsaw , and numerous research institutes and private universities (2) and schools at university level (8) were added to the list of institutions of higher learning. In 1939 there were 907 professors at these schools and 2852 assistants and lecturers, many providing instruction to the 48,000 students.[175]

This number of students at Polish institutions of higher learning remained fairly constant from 1928/29 (first data obtained) through 1938/39. Despite the fact that women outnumbered men by some 7% in the general population[176] male students outnumbered females roughly 2 or 3 to 1 at these higher level schools. In 1930/31 there were 48,000 students enrolled, 34,000 of these were males, while only 14,000 were females.[177] Of the already significantly smaller number of females fewer still completed their programs. In 1935 of the 6118 undergraduate diplomas granted only 1745 were given to females.[178] It is difficult to determine the reasons for this imbalance, but it may be possible that the so-called *numerus clausus* had atleast a little influence on the

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[174]Jaczewski, Bohdan, Organizacja i Finansowanie Nauki Polskiej w Okresie Miedzywojennym. Wroclaw: Wyd. Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1971, pp.63-64.
[175]Murray, op.cit., pp.124-126.
[176]Dyboski, 1933, op.cit., p.291.
[177]ibid., p.291.
[178]Vetulani, Adam, "L'Enseignment Superieur", In, Pologne. op.cit., p.195.

situation.

In fact, this device was originally intended to function as a "quota system" which would limit enrollment during times of economic duress. It came, rather quickly, to be used as a method of restricting enrollment of students from minority groups - many of which were perceived to have goals and aspirations different from those of the "Polish" nation. The net result of this general restriction of admission to the higher levels of education was to have the effect of creating a very squat-shaped "educational pyramid".

In 1937/38 there were 4,701,200 pupils at the elementary school level, 113,800 students in vocational schools, 197,500 in the *Gimnazja*, 36,700 at the *Licea* (1938/39 figures[179]) and 48,000 at the highest level.

It must be clarified, at this point, that restrictions in enrollment were not simply a matter of "policy". Actually, budgetary considerations were much more important as funding for education was almost constantly deemed insufficient by educators and also by critics of the government. Interestingly, it is extremely difficult to find accurate breakdowns of government alotments for education (or more accurately for the MWRiOP). According to Stanislaw Karski the budget of the MWRiOP for 1921 was 40 million *zlotys* (5.17% of national expenditure) and that this rose to

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[179]Murray, op.cit., p.115, and Pologne. op.cit., p.157.

311 million *zlotys* (17% of national expenditure) in 1925.[180] In 1928/29 the budget rose again, this time to 321 million *zlotys* (14.3%) and by 1938/39 it reached its peak of 432 million *zlotys* (15.2%).[181]

The budgetary allotment for military expenditure, which was the highest of all allotments in the 1930's, was set at 27.5%[182] (in 1938/39 this would mean 781,275,000 *zl.*), with education, according to Dyboski, being the recipient of the second highest quota.

Whether this alocation of funds was rational and genuinely proportional is exceedingly difficult to determine. It would appear that government spending in other areas, particularly on the expansion of industry, via the *State Plan* of 1936-1939, was beginning to show some success by 1939. The Industrial Index rose to 119 in that year (1928 = 100).[183] This would indicate that since government spending in that sector of the economy was sufficient to bring about some positive results, funding must have been adequate.

The state of the military in 1939 indicated that proportionately high government expenditure in that area was not sufficient to provide the armed forces with enough "state-of-the-art" equipment. Some critics, however, have charged that military spending may have been mismanaged.

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[180]Karski, op.cit., p.40.
[181]Pologne., p.154.
[182]Davies, 1982, op.cit., pp.415-416.
[183]ibid., pp.417-418.

This is of course subject to debate, and there does not appear to be any definitive analysis available.

In any event, the portion of the budget set aside for education tended to hover around the 15% mark for most of the years of the existence of the Second Republic. None of the available sources[184] suggest any breakdown of these monies, i.e. there are no breakdowns according to spending on the various levels and branches of education. Only Roman Dyboski [185] states that circa 1932 9/10ths of the allotment for education was spent on teachers' and administrators' salaries, with the bulk of the monies going toward the elementary and secondary sectors.

His claims are probably quite accurate, especially when one considers that a "first-year" teacher (Category I) in eastern Poland (there were regional variations in salaries) was paid only 145 *zlotys* per month (1937) for the first two years of his/her employment.[186] Even a headmaster with 12 years teaching experience was making only 360 *zlotys* per month in 1939 - and this in Silesia where the "cost of living allowance" was higher![187]

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[184]The Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy - 1935 offers no such breakdown either!

[185]Dyboski, 1933, op.cit., pp.274-275.

[186]April 6, 1988 interview with Mr. Stan. Nowicki of Tucson, Arizona. Mr. Nowicki was employed as a teacher in Poland from 1937 until 1939.

[187]ibid..

Teachers' salaries may have been somewhat lower than those of other civil servants. Landau and Tomaszewski claim that, in 1932, the average office worker was paid 182 - 257 *zlotys*, a department head, 645 - 758 *zlotys*, and a manager of a "section" as much as 787 - 975 *zlotys*. [Landau, Z. and J. Tomaszewski, Trudna Niepodleglosc: Rozwazania o Gospodarce Polski 1918-1939. Warszawa: Ksiazka i Wiedza,

Given that there were more than 70,000 elementary school teachers and 27,172 secondary, vocational, and "upgrading school" teachers[188] for a total of approximately 100,000, all being paid between 145 and 360 *zl.* per month for 12 months every year, the total annual payment of salaries would have to fall somewhere between 174 million *zl.* and 432 million *zl.*! Very little of the budgetary allotment would then be left for other educational purposes.

Having given consideration to Kormanowa's rather compelling "lament" and to the "economic realities" it is possible to conclude that the Polish state could not afford this system of education - as inadequate as it may have been to meeting the needs of the people and the state.

The "pupil-teacher ratio" increased in the cities from 39.8:1 in 1922/23 to 56.1:1 in 1936/37[189], and in the rural areas from 58.2:1 to 63.9:1 in the same period.[190] The resultant "pedagogical" problems were compounded by shortages of space and instructional materials, so much so that they could be linked directly to the promotion/failure

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[187](cont'd) 1978, p.121.]
Unmarried, teachers, without dependants could live reasonably well on 145 *zlotys* especially if one considers that a family of four could survive on 77 *zl.* per month (Landau and Tomaszewski, p.124.). Food and accomodation, particularly in the rural areas of Eastern Poland was inexpensive. Private bachelor quarters could be rented for about 20 *zl.* per month and such food items as eggs could be obtained for 40 *groszy* per dozen, 1 lb. of butter for 20-25 *gr.*, and 1 kg. of sugar for 1 *zl.*10 *gr.* (100 *groszy* make up 1 *zloty* and 5 *zl.* equal about 1 U.S. dollar). [Interview with W. Adamowicz, April 6, 1988.]

[188]Rocznik..., op.cit., p.349

[189]Pologne. op.cit., p.158.

[190]ibid..

and even attendance rates of the students. These problems were felt most acutely in the rural areas.

In the school-year 1927/28 25.6% of all children attending rural school "failed" to be promoted to the next highest class or grade. In fact the over-all situation was such that only 16% of all of the children in rural areas completed the 7 forms in the minimum of 7 years. Some took longer, others simply dropped out without completing the program. Between 1920 and 1929 only 8.4% of rural school children completed the full 7 forms (56.9% in the autonomous Silesian system).[191]

These failures were not just the result of overcrowding and inadequate materials, but poor enforcement of compulsory attendance legislation. The attendance rate, however, rose from a national average of 65% in 1920/21 to a maximum of 96.4% in 1928/29, dropped to 89.5% in 1932/33[192] and to 88.9% in 1936/37[193], but bounced back slightly to 90% by 1938/39.[194] Some writers estimate that there may have been as many as 1,000,000[195] children not attending school in the year just before the outbreak of World War II. There is no evidence that anyone had even tried to compile the rates of attendance of the children who were actually enrolled in schools.[196] Without doubt, these rates of attendance would

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[191]Trzebiatowski, op.cit., p.332.
[192]Bromberek, op.cit., p.56.
[193] Pologne. op.cit., p.158.
[194]Murray, op.cit., p.113.
[195]According to official statistics only about 500,000 children were not attending school.
[196]This data, albeit for Alberta, was published as a matter of custom in the Annual Reports of the Department of

be considerably lower.

The situation in the educational system was dismal in many ways, but it was also hopeful and overly ambitious. The state in all likelihood could not afford to spend any more money on education, and it also couldn't afford to cut back or reduce its scope. Perhaps the system could have been administered more efficiently but, it seems that this criticism is easily made after-the-fact. It is worth noting however, that the system of education as it existed in the rural areas was far less effective and efficient than it was in the cities.

The following chapter will contain some possible explanations for these developments - mainly from the rural perspective. It is this student's contention that the system of education implemented in the rural areas was shaped not only by some distant dominant elite, but also by its recipients, namely the peasants.[197] This social group or *estate* had considerably more impact on the shape of the system than most previous writers have estimated.

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[196](cont'd) Education of the Province of Alberta atleast until 1939!

[197]A similar approach, albeit to the study of Danish urban schools, was proposed by Ning de Coninck-Smith in the paper "Attitudes to the Elementary Schools System Among Copenhagen Working-Class Parents (1870-c. 1900). Description of a Research Project." delivered at the 8th Session of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education, Parma, Italy, 1986.

V. PEASANTS, PEASANTISM AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

> We must go forward, because we have stood too long in one place. Only then will we go. Our road is long. From the plough into the world - ....[198]

> The peasants are not Poland's foundlings, but rather her landlords [*gospodarze*][...]. The peasants must claim what is theirs ....[199]

> The conscious peasant - ... his mind is oriented differently, his desires or aspirations go considerably farther. He does not live off of anyone's kindness, he does not stretch out his hand to anyone for alms, rather he knows and feels that he maintains someone else. He demands for himself his deserved place (position) in Poland, that his class, his person and his humanity be held in esteem.[200]

In the period between the failed Uprising of 1863 and the attainment of Independence in 1918, the Polish *Szlachta* turned its attention to the education of the peasants. Ultimately, these "forgotten Poles" were to be rehabilitated and drawn into the common struggle for national independence. This liberal minded *Szlachta* like their Russian *Narodnik* counterparts recognized the political potential of an enfranchised peasant class. They even came to believe that they could guide, if not blatantly *lead*, this class in the creation of a "new order" in their respective states.

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[198]The enlightened peasant Tomala's remarks to the socialist-minded village school teacher in: Wiktor, Jan, Orka na Ugorze. Warszawa: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1955, p. 330. (First published in Poland in 1935. English translation of title : Ploughing Fallow Land .

[199]From a speach given by Wincenty Witos, the leader of the Polish Peasant Party - *Piast*, to the inhabitants of Zamosc, ca. 1932. Part of this speach was quoted in: Zakrzewski, Andrzej, Wincenty Witos: Chlopski Polityk i Maz Stanu. Warszawa: Ludowa Spoldzielnia Wydawnicza, 1977, p.289.

[200]Excerpt from another speach (ca. 1932) given by Wincenty Witos. Source: ibid., p.291.

The Russian *Narodnichestvo* or populist movement gained momentum while opposing both the reactionary Tsarist regime and the proponents of western socialism. They worked dilligently toward the establishment of a new *communitarian* society, but World War I and the Bolshevic seizure of power in 1917 effectively terminated their efforts.

The Polish populist/peasantist parties and groups, the leadership of which was becoming increasingly "peasantized", somewhat de-emphasized their ideological stand-points and took on more nationalist orientations. This slight shift caused the populist/peasantist political block to be wooed by the socialists and communists on the left and also by the democratic right. In fact, the populists and peasantists came to be directly involved in the establishment of a government in newly independent Poland. They were therefore in a very strong position from which they could pursue the interests of their group. Znaniecki and Thomas describe the situation of the peasantry in general in this way:

> All at once the peasant has become the complete master of his destiny; his growing social and economic power, in connection with the fact that he has the majority, may make him the master of Poland. Thus Poland, for centuries a nobility nation, tends at the present moment to become a peasant nation. It will be interesting to see the direction in which this tendency is modified by the future industrial development of this state.[201]

Alas, the strength of their parliamentary position, and the spectre of the "awakening" of an overwhelming proportion of the population from which these parties could draw their

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[201]Znaniecki and Thomas, op.cit., Vol. 2, p.1463.

support were perceived to be serious threats to both the remainder of the political right and the left. The conservative elements saw in the rise of peasantism the over-turn of the traditional dominance of the *Szlachta* and also of industrial capital. The socialists on the other hand identified more with the industrial and landless agrarian proletariats than with the landowning peasants, feared that the peasants might force a slow-down of industrial expansion in favour of serious and practical agricultural reforms. In this way the drive for "modernization of the nation" could be seriously impeded, and the industrial proletariat (or electorate) would not grow sufficiently to enable the socialists to expand their political power-base.[202]

The Polish populist/peasantist parties, therefore came into direct conflict with the other Polish political parties quite often. Curiously, they also made strange alliances in the parliament mainly over religious and nationalistic issues. They strongly supported the institution of mandatory Catholic religious instruction (for Catholics) in the public schools, and the use of Polish as the language of instruction. The Peasant Parties also supported the implementation of a *numerus clausus* for the higher institutions. They felt that the number of "foreign" , i.e. Ukrainian, Jewish, German, etc., students taking seats away

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[202]The Polish Communist Party had been outlawed since the Polish-Soviet War of 1921-22. The communist dream of an international revolution was seen to be a threat to Polish statehood. Also, this "internationalism" smacked too much of the Russian imperialism experienced by the Poles during the Partition period.

from "Polish" students in these schools would thereby be reduced.[203] These attitudes were very similar to, if not actually the same as those of the right-wing National and Christian Democratic Parties.

Much to the chagrin of the rightist parties, the Populists/Peasantists vehemently supported Socialist proposals for a homogeneous school system for the rural and urban populations. They came out strongly in favour of most of the egalitarian proposals of the socialists, so long as these had nothing to do with religious or nationalist sentiments, eg. some of the monetary policies, and certain social-welfare legislation. In fact, the Populist/Peasantist position was often confused with that of the socialists - at least until the mid-1930's when peculiar political compromises and syntheses between the left and the right froze the peasantists out. In disillusionment their ideas and policies became confused and at times appeared to be fascist. Indeed often they became radically leftist in their orientation.

The post-war communist regime attempted very energetically to exploit these tendencies, and even to deny that there ever were any real differences between the agrarian populist/ peasantist and the communist views. They tried, in simple terms, to assimilate the peasantists and the peasants into their world-view. There is very good reason to believe that the Communists, and in particular the

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[203]Zakrzewski, op.cit., p.153.

government of Wladyslaw Gomulka, were afraid of potential political power of the peasants, ("[who] were a power with which one had to reckon. . . [they were] a monolith: united in their religious faith, and equally attached to the land of their fathers...."[204])and for this reason they strongly emphasized and advocated cooperation between their party, the P.Z.P.R. (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* - The United Polish Workers Party), and the Z.S.L. (*Zjednoczona Partia Ludowa*- the United Populist Party) which represented the peasants.[205] The events of the late 1970's and the early 1980's further demonstrate, that the peasantist agrarian orientation - or the adherence of the peasants to the position that the land, agriculture, the family, and the Church are of paramount importance - is still intact despite thirty to forty years of subjection to the influence of communist ideology. It is as if the peasants had lapsed into their primeval a-historic role and winked out of and back into history again.[206]

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[204]Celt, Marek, "Trzecia Faza Polityki Agrarnej Gomulki", Munich: Radio Free Europe, Polish Section, 1968. as quoted in Narkiewicz, op.cit., p.262.

[205]ibid..

[206]See Chapter I and the discussion of Spengler's conceptualization of history, and especially of his description of the peasants' role (or the lack of it) in history. It may therefore be postulated that the peasants, as a power wielding group, "wink into and out of history" whenever they come into contact with some "opposition" or new ideas to which they must react. They wink out "once they have assimilated the new experience into their scheme" or when they realize that there is little they can do to alter the situation. However, with the industrialization and "modernization" of their states of residence and the introduction of formal public education, the peasants have been forced into interaction with members of other social classes. In fact they have been forced into historic

In past centuries the peasant has usually come into history wielding an axe or a scythe, the bloodying of which was the leverage required for the implementation of his political and/or economic demands. Since the creation of populist and peasant political parties with the ability to express the demands of the peasants in parliament, the peasant has had access to less violent means of effecting political, social and economic changes. This, however, has proved to be no less frightening to traditional aristocracies and other ruling elites - including those of socialist and communist persuasion.

A. Peasantism

> [The] common tongue between the peasants who are the body of the nation, and the intellectuals who should be its brains, has not quite yet been found in the new Polish Republic. While peasant power has been rising in the "questionable shape" of class selfishness, the prestige of the educated class has been decaying, as in most European countries since the war, together with its standard of living.[207]

Peasantism, and also agrarian populism, as political forces are unique and peculiar in that they are neither clearly leftist nor rightist phenomena. In fact, they "are a

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[206](cont'd) existence more and more often since 1848, 1863, and especially 1918 - the end of World War I.

[207]Dyboski, Roman, "The Peasant in Modern Poland" In, The Slavonic Review. vol. II, no. 4, June, 1923, pp.101-113.

'peasant' phenomenon and [do] not present the intellectual challenge of socialism, nationalism, or fascism."[208] They are the extension and/or projection of the peasant world-view onto a modern state. Olga Narkiewicz explains that, "... the apex of peasant life, the high point of agricultural endeavour, the most important need of populism, is the creation of a party or movement which looks after peasant politics."[209] Not surprisingly, the peasantist and agrarian populist movements appear to espouse anachronistic views in that they, (usually the slavophile manifestations), often oppose rapid and un-ordered western style industrial modernization. They do, however, tend to envision the modernization and improvement of agriculture and, most often, expansion of secondary industry first, along with the development of international trade as the bases of their ideal economies.

Their view of world affairs tends to be somewhat idyllic or even pacific. They transfer the patterns of stability or continuity and certain notions about the productivity of the peasant farm - their idealized microcosm onto world affairs. They appear to place their faith in the truth of the maxim, "Where there is order, there is peace." This does not mean that the peasants or their modern

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[208] Narkiewicz, op.cit., p.277.
[209] Narkiewicz, ibid., p.274.
She also distinguishes between agrarian populism and its legitimate off-spring, industrial populism which is spawned when the peasants move into employment in industry. She adds that these two movements are parallel to socialist populism and socialist industrialism - which may, but need not, be "necessarily Marxist."(Narkiewicz, pp.274-275.)

political representatives were, or are incapable of hatred or the use of it against perceived enemies, sometimes vociferously attacking capitalists, sometimes Jews, and also often times other minority groups. Even these activities may be seen, in peasant logic, as attempts to create order.

It is the peasants' desire for order and freedom, as influenced by their "religious tradition..., [their] family life, [and by the] orderly regularity ... taught by the soil and its function,"[210] that form the basis of the their political thinking.

It must be clarified however, that the peasant does not believe that he is actually *creating* order - he is merely restoring or re-instituting it. He accepts that there is a tendency toward order in the broad scheme of occurences in nature - that there is a "solidarity in nature"[211] - and that man is an integral part of this (scheme). The interactions or relationships of men, both with natural phenomena and each other, also occur within this scheme and are therefore guided by "rules" which ought to prevent them from overstepping the boundaries of their rightful roles. This metaphysical concept is even further complicated by religion as modified by peculiar pre-Christian regional beliefs and practices. The influence of these religious traditions, including the magical aspects, on the attitudes

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[210]F. Milan Hodza, as quoted in: Ionescu, Ghita, "Eastern Europe", In, G. Ionescu and E. Gellner, (Eds.). Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics. London: Weidenfield and Nielson, 1969, p.108.
[211]Znaniecki and Thomas, op.cit., pp.220-221.

and behaviour of the peasants is enormous. These traditions are of "fundamental practical importance..; a vital condition of [the peasants'] existence."[212] It is unavoidable therefore, that this "world-view" adopted by the peasants affects or influences their political thinking and activity.

An additional dimension of peasant political thought is "the belief in the natural superiority of the peasants' way of life and of the rural society over the urban life of both bourgeois and industrial workers."[213] The peasants feel that they "had not become alienated from the normal condition of mankind"[214] as had the urban dwellers. Ghita Ionescu, in describing the philosophies of two peasantist doctrinaires, the Yugoslav, Rudolf Herceg, and the Russian, now American Pitirim Sorokin, wrote that:

> For both the towns were parasitical excrescences in which exploiters and exploited (and in them the condition of the industrial workers was described as the most unnatural and unhappy), once torn away from their natural community, fell prey to the unhealthy instincts of greed and revolt. The setting and the rhythm of the peasant's life alone could ensure the reconcilliation with human fate, regardless whether this was part of a pantheistic or of a straightforward religious conception. Finally, the peasants were the producers of the goods without which towns and their populations would perish. While the villages were self-contained the towns, in all their splendour, were dependent on the products of the countryside.[215]

Obviously then, the peasants had developed the philosophical foundations for their political movements,

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[212] ibid., p.221.
[213] ibid., p.107.
[214] ibid..
[215] ibid., pp.107-108.

along with a belief in the righteousness of their way of life, and in their most outspoken representatives, a sense of mission bordering on Jesuit fanaticism. "What the rural masses finally offered the universal democracy of Central Europe was therefore the extensive support of the idea of ordered freedom."[216]

Unlike the Russian populists who proposed to transform an archaic collectivistic agrarian society into a modern one with advanced socialist structures (not necessarily controlled by the peasants)[217], the eastern and central European populist/ peasantist parties proposed to "mould the society and its state on the peasants' conception of work, property and administration"; to blend their "social-economic doctrines with a strong nationalistic concern for...emancipation... from under foreign domination"; and to put forward their "claims that the peasantry is entitled as a class to the leadership of the political society, not only on account of its electoral preponderance, but also because of its innate spiritual and national values."[218]

In Poland the populist/peasantist parties were rather thorough mixtures of nationalist agrarian populists and "true" peasantists, while in Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia and Croatia the populists formed seperate parties from those of the peasantists. In fact, the

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[216] ibid., p.108.
[217] ibid., p.98.
[218] ibid., p.99.

peasantists eventually came to dominate the agrarian movements in most of the countries of Eastern Europe.[219]

Though it is a little known fact, these parties even went so far as to establish (in 1927) the International Agrarian Bureau which came to be known popularly as the Agrarian or Green International. Seventeen parties from all over Europe attended its first general assembly in May of 1929. "The fundamental principles of the international movement were: the preservation of the private property of the land, the need for organized international trade, the intensification of co-operative organization, the fostering of technical education and the fight against under-capitalization of agriculture."[220]

Apparently, the leaders of the Third Communist International felt some anxiety about the possible negative actions of the Green International against their agrarian section. These anxieties were however laid to rest by the political and economic crises of the late 1920's and early 1930's.

The constitutional democratic systems of most of the countries experiencing the rise of the peasantist phenomenon were disrupted by coups; Bulgaria in 1923, Poland in 1926, Yugoslavia in 1929, Rumania in 1931. The peasant parties in these countries were subsequently (and consequently in some cases) attacked and dislodged from power. The Stalinist

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[219]For an excellent explanation of the differences between agrarian populism and peasantism see:
Ionescu, G., ibid.
[220]ibid., p.121.

Soviet attack on the mainly Ukrainian peasants, or *Kulaks* of the Soviet Union in the early 1930's is also by now well documented.[221]

The peasantry, as a class, was in most cases not completely in a state of consciousness or awareness and the political education of that portion which was aware had not been adequate or complete enough to enable them to defend their parties or groups. The peasantists and the huge masses which they represented fell victim to the new political elites and the governments which they imposed upon them.

The so-called "final blow" to the peasantists' aspirations for the creation of a "new order" was delivered by the economic recession of 1929 and the early 1930's. The peasants, suffering varying degrees of political repression and economic pressure often of catastrophic proportions, seemingly started to withdraw, or to "wink out" again.[222] Of course, this withdrawal from historic action could not be as complete as had been the case "in days long past", because various social-political and social-economic conditions and the efforts of peasant party activists, as well as those of the peasants who had attained some degree of awareness or consciousness, prevented this. The peasantist cause or

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[221]For an excellent overview and analysis of this occurrence see:
Conquest, Robert, The Harvest of Sorrow . Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press and The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986.

[222]The artificially induced famine in the Soviet Union went beyond simple repression. It has been described as an act of genocide - a more permanent solution to Stalin's peasant problem.

struggle would continue, but for the majority of the peasantry the late 1920's and the 1930's were a very critical period. They had basically three options: they could withdraw back into their village lives; or, they could continue promoting their cause (at some risk however); or, they could change their orientation and adopt the economic and social world-views of the urban-industrial elites.

In Poland, depending on the region in which they resided, the peasants opted, in varying proportions of their populations, for all three choices. The factors which appeared to determine the individual choice were: the peasant's degree or state of awareness; the availabililty of work off of the farm; the availability of educational facilities which provided programs leading to off-farm employment and increased income; and, also the lowering of certain social barriers to social mobility. If the peasant had not yet attained at least a low level of awareness the other options were probably not available or perhaps were just personally inconceivable. With increased awareness came a corresponding degree of "pull" toward education, but only if it permitted an increase in income and/or upward social mobility. It is probable that if these factors were present, and the peasant's attachment to peasantist notions was not inordinately strong then he could shift his orientation toward that of the urban-industrial dominant group.[223] The

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[223]Znaniecki and Thomas note that some of the peasants who left the villages to work in urban centres (in Poland or abroad) before the First World War went through something like "culture-shock." Feeling alienated and disillusioned

peasant could then be assimilated into the urban way of life and perhaps even granted membership in the dominant group or the elite - the *Szlachta-cum-Intelligentsia* of the new heirarchic order.[224]

Interestingly, the third alternative and the subsequent chain of events or occurrences which it might precipitate is in keeping with Vilfredo Pareto's theory of elites.[225] He states that an elite group may try to eliminate a person or persons who pose threats to its existence by admitting them into the group - provided of course that they "adopt elite attitudes and interests."[226] There is sufficient evidence to indicate that this did occur on many occasions, both within and outside of the political arena, in Inter-war Poland.

Based on this knowledge, it may be possible to posit that those peasantists and peasant parties which joined or

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[223](cont'd) they returned to their villages - only to find that they didn't really fit there any more either. This was especially true if they had married someone from outside of the usual circle of villages or if the forces for "egotism" of the family (i.e. the desire to limit influence to the nuclear family) had become stronger for them than those of the extended family or even of the village community. [See: Znaniecki and Thomas, op.cit., pp.98-103.]

[224]Thomas's and Znaniecki's description of the "new heirarchization" from a sociological perspective has been discussed in Chapter III. Basically they state that the traditional conference of rights was based on *Rodowitosc* or (noble) status at birth, but that this changed during the Partition period. Intellectual achievement and secondly, wealth (capital and income) became the criteria upon which location in the new heirarchy was determined. Of course, once this new "intellectual aristocracy" had "succeeded in imposing its standard of values upon the whole system..." (Thomas and Znaniecki, ibid., p.133.) certain aspects of the claims according to *Rodowitosc* started to reappear.

[225]Pareto, Vilfredo. The Mind and Society . New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935.

[226]ibid., vol. 4, p.1796.

supported the B.B.W.R. (*Bez-Partyjny Blok Wspolpracy z Rzadem* or The Non-Party Bloc for the Support of the Government) during its seven years of existence from 1928 through 1935 had been granted at least some degree of membership in the ruling elite. After 1935, there was no perceived need for such a bloc, presumably because the elite was firmly in control - politically and ideologically. The few remaining "hard-line" peasantists, including Wincenty Witos, were unable to have any real impact on the affairs of the state.

There were also scores of individual examples of this upward mobility leading to subsequent adoption into the elite. The fact remains however, that most of the peasants kept to their villages. They were however, increasingly subjected to the pressures and intrusions of the creations of the essentially urban-oriented government. Popular acceptance of the notion that the "peasants would ... become the social foundation of national unity, as the nobility in the past was its political foundation,"[227] decreased rapidly. The new elite turned its attention to the creation of a full-fledged modern European state and once again the more radical elements of the *intelligentsia* turned to the peasants not just to "enlighten" them but to exploit their potential as a political power-base.[228] Almost ironically,

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[227] Znaniecki and Thomas, op.cit., vol.2, p.1442.

[228] A periodical which published a series of articles (1935 to 1937) decrying the anti-peasant attitudes and policies of the "ruling elite" and also carried the admonitions of the "new *intelligentsia*" was *Bunt Mlodych*. Most notable, among many, was the article by Aleksander Bochenski, "*Inteligencja*

the most interactive peasants often unwittingly facilitated the acculturative or even assimilative endeavours of all of the industrialist-oriented political "camps", by promoting or accepting public education, military conscription, the biased reporting of the news media, and the socialist and/or militant nationalist (eg. anti-semitic) aspects of various co-operatives.

B. Public Education

The elderly grandfather of a peasant school-boy was summoned to the home of the teacher after the boy had committed some misdemeanour in class. Seeing that the teacher's home was quite well appointed, the peasant couldn't control his curiosity and asked,"How is it that you have come by such comfort?" "Education, sir!" responded the teacher rather smugly. The peasant, by now somewhat enthused, asked, "So, where does one get this Education?" "In school of course!" replied the teacher.

The next morning, interrupting the first lessons, the elderly peasant walked into the classroom. The teacher asked, somewhat gruffly, what the peasant wanted. "I'm here to get some Education." responded the peasant. The teacher, still somewhat annoyed at the interruption curtly snapped that, "It's too late!" The old man shrugged his shoulders and went home.

The next morning, just as the sun was rising, the peasant came pounding to the teacher's door. He explained that he'd been to the school but it was locked. The teacher still groggy from sleep muttered, "It's too early!" "Bah! Yesterday I was too late, today I'm too early," complained the peasant, "When should I come?" Consciousness coming to the teacher, he responded, "No you don't understand! It's too late for YOU. You're too old!" "Oh," sighed the old man, "I see."

The peasant went home. Some months later, while digging a new well, he discovered gold. With his

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228(cont'd) *Wobec Chlopow*", 20 September, 1935, p.4.

new-found fortune he built a house, bought fine furniture, etc.. The teacher was passing by one day and stopped in. Seeing the opulent decore of the elderly peasant's home, he couldn't help but be overcome by wonder. "How did you come by all of this wealth?" asked the mystified teacher, "How is it that your situation improved so much so quickly?" The peasant, drew deeply on his pipe, and exhaling said with great seriousness and dignity, "Education, Sir, Education!"[229]

Typical of the social commentary of so-called Polish political humour, this joke points out some of the numerous ironies created by, or inherent in, the implementation of the government's policy of establishing a universal educational system. First, if formal public education was for the "good" of the entire nation, then why was it restricted to the children? What was to become of the others? Second, how was this "Education" useful? Did it really make you wealthy, so you could improve your living conditions? Obviously, this wasn't happening for many peasant graduates of the primary schools. Third, did it make the acquisition of wealth and its advantages as easy as finding buried treasure? In fact, one somewhat cryptic inference is that the chances of acquiring wealth through education are about as great as those of finding buried treasure. On the other hand, the inference may be that education is more of a "sure thing." The interpretation is left up to the individual hearing the joke. It is undeniable however, that the old peasant did find the, admittedly

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[229]Several versions of this joke were well-known in Inter-war Poland. It is even possible that its origins pre-date the declaration of Polish Independence in 1918. Source: Interview with Walter and Apolonia Adamowicz, April 6, 1988.

serendipitous source of his wealth on his own land and not through education.

The association of wealth, or more accurately "well being," with land is basic to peasant life and economics. Certainly the land is economic value, (in sociologists' jargon) but more importantly it is a "social value."[230] In other words it has the "social character" of being the main criterion by which the "social expression" of the peasant family may be determined. "The greater the amount of land, the greater the possibility of social expression ..."[231] or social power. According to Znaniecki and Thomas, "[land] has also an exceptional value from other points of view - as an object of work, as an object of magical rites and religious beliefs, and later as a basis of national cohesion."[232]

"A peasant without land is an alienated personality; a *whole* [sic] peasant must own, or lease, land from which to feed himself and his family..," writes Olga Narkiewicz[233]. "When deprived of land the peasant has to look for other means of sustaining himself and his family. It is then up to society to find these means."[234]

Actually, an attraction to the economic advantages proferred by urban/industrial society, coupled with the inability or inadequacy of the farm to meet the basic needs of the peasants, eventually causes most peasants to change

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[230]Znaniecki and Thomas, op.cit., p.161.
[231]ibid., p.162.
[232] ibid., p.163.
[233]Narkiewicz, op.cit., p.272.
[234]ibid., p.273.

their traditional attitude that land is the exclusive measure of one's economic situation, to a new one where income also becomes important. This gradual shift from subsistence farming to dependence on outside income brings with it the creation of the new "needs" of "city products, city pleasures, [and] learning [emphasis mine]"[235] - especially among the younger generations of peasants. Also, coincidentally with, and as a result of, the increased interaction with the industrial aspects of urban life, comes an increase in the mechanization of agricultural technology - and this in turn alters the role of the family and creates a new economic scheme or perception for the operation of the "farm." It is in this manner that the inexorable process of assimilation into tertiary - or urban/industrial - society (as anthropologists would classify it) begins for the practitioners of the secondary "way-of-life" - i.e. the peasants.[236]

Obviously then, this movement to the "next level" or new way of life is influenced greatly by the economic "pull

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[235]Znaniecki and Thomas, op.cit., pp.167-169.

[236]Arnold Toynbee tends to see this process as part of the general evolution of Western society.He writes:

> In the first place, the Western society articulated itself into a patchwork of geographically segregated parochial states. In the second place, it gradually transformed itself from an ultra-rural society of peasants and landlords into an ultra-urban society of artisans and bourgeois. In the third place, this nationalist-minded and middle-class-minded latter-day Western society emerged from the relative obscurity of its medieval chapter and came rapidly to overshadow all the rest of the world.

[Toynbee, Arnold J., A Study of History. vol. 2, (abridged edition), New York: Dell, 1957, p.194.]

effect" of income and by the "push effect" of the insufficiency of land to meet the needs for simple subsistence. Theoretically at least, it may be possible, through the use of an economic model, to determine which "effect" is the stronger. It may even be possible to try to modify these "effects" to either encourage or to discourage assimilation. These exercises however, may be of little value because of the indeterminate effects of other "human factors" influencing the rates, degrees and qualities of interactions between the peasants and other groups within the general society.

It would be very difficult, for example, to determine the effects, on the urban elite, of the fear of fulfillment of the Malthusian prophecy in which the peasants would have to be seen as being responsible for the increase of the population to the point where food supplies would be exhausted. Would the urban elite react negatively to what Toynbee so euphemistically, yet eloquently, described as, "the peasantry's improvident incontinence" in "the begetting of children,"[237] and go so far as to contravene the basic tenets of "social justice?" or, would they resort to some other means which might even bring about a so-called "demographic transition?" No matter whether the urban elite opts for more violent or less violent means, its reactions will still ultimately have to be based on the emotional and on what Pareto calls "the nonrational."[238] Since these

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[237] ibid., pp.376-377.
[238] Pareto, op.cit..

aspects of political reactions are not quantifiable they cannot be completely explained by economic reasoning. However, they can be comprehended more readily through analyses of their philosophical bases.

It must therefore be acknowledged that the nature or tenor of interactions between the peasant masses and the urban/industrial elite in any state which has set (through some political system) Western-style modernization as its goal, will be determined to a great extent by the philosophical perspectives of the members of the major groups. This becomes particularly evident when we look carefully at the proposals for, and reactions to, the various conceptions of the system of public education suggested and/or implemented in Inter-war Poland.

Generally speaking, the perspectives of the authors of these various systems have been classified as "social-progressive" , conservative, or as the "compromise" between the two.[239] Actually, the philosophies underlying these broader perspectives were considerably more numerous, but when the whole process of the creation of a philosophical basis for the system is considered, they appear as an amalgam of world-views.

The influence of the philosophical outlook or world-view of the peasants on this system of public education is not very well understood. Indeed, it is very seldom given the consideration which it deserves, presumably

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[239]See Chapter IV for descriptions of these perspectives.

because it was (and still is to a great extent) virtually inconceivable that the reactions of the peasants could be the results of anything but irrational adherence to tradition and simple ignorance - the condition in which all "unevolved" peoples are thought to dwell. Certainly, sociologists, anthropologists, and even economists have studied or at least examined the social structures and belief systems of peasant societies, but only a very few have come to appreciate that the peasants' perceptions of reality may be valid given the fact that their perceptions are component parts of a philosophical system which has facilitated the survival of these people through the millenia of their existence. Admittedly, it may be difficult to envision the "equality" of the intellectual/rational aspects of the peasant way-of-life because their philosophy is mainly "lived" as opposed to one which is verbalized or articulated. None-the-less, these intellectual/rational aspects must be acknowledged as being on an equal plain with those of the "educated" elite - otherwise, our studies will be affected by a type of "social Darwinism" which classifies the peasants as being socially inferior.

Only after we have accepted the legitimacy and the validity of the philosophical systems of the peasants will we be able to compare them to those of the urban/industrial elite and, through this comparison, give proper consideration to the reactions of the peasants to the Polish system of formal public education. Our studies must go

beyond economic analysis coloured by sociological/anthropological insights. They must also give adequate recognition to the philosophical perspectives of the "participants" - in the case of this study, the peasants.

This social group or society adheres mainly to a "realistic" philosophy, the structure of which is imprinted on all of their thinking.[240] This approach to life is quite unlike the "nominalistic"[241] tendency of the educated urban dwellers. The peasants have developed their approach through a reliance on an immense, well-developed and strong "oral tradition" (with universalistic tendencies) which they use for the transmission of the knowledge essential for life in their particular society. They have never established schools while their society has been allowed to live in isolation from other societies. On the other hand, the urban dwellers, because of the comparatively high degree of specialization or division of labour in their society, must

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[240] In philosophy, Realism is "the doctrine that universal principles are more real than objects as sensed." (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language) While this may not be identical with peasant philosophy as it is expressed in living everyday life, it is in many ways similar to it.
[See also: Wild, John, "Education and Human Society: A Realistic View" In, Nelson B. Henry, (Ed.). Modern Philosophies and Education: The Fifty-fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955, pp.17-56.

[241] In philosophy, Nominalism is "the doctrine that abstract concepts, general terms, or universals have no objective reference but exist only as names." (The American Heritage Dictionary...). Empiricism, or the use of empirical methods, is seen to be the most acceptable way of approaching life or living.

rely on an "artificial" device or institution such as public education - which they see as both a form of economic investment and of consumption for their society.[242]

These general differences in philosophical approaches to life and in the methods used for the transmission of knowledge in the two societies must be acknowledged in order that we may have some some starting point or basis for the future determination of the nature of reactions to the establishment of the system of formal public education in the rural areas.

i. The System

As a result of the efforts of the nationalist/conservative elements within the various governments of Inter-war Poland the Education ministry's pedagogical and curricular schemes implemented in the rural areas of the country were not only different from those for the urban areas but they were also inferior in many ways. Generally speaking, the attitude taken toward the education of children living in the rural areas was that: (a) they lived in an environment which was less conducive to intellectual development and, (b) they would not, in all likelihood, be advancing to the higher levels of schooling because the curriculum at these (higher) levels was of

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[242]Introduction to :Schultz, T. W., "Investment in Human Capital" In, M. Blaug, (Ed.). Economics of Education 1. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968, pp.11-33.

little or no value or relevance to small or subsistence farmers. Therefore, the schooling which they "ought" to receive need not provide a basis for studies at a higher level, but should simply enable them to function more efficiently as agricultural labourers, and/or to be loyal and dutiful citizens.

The orientation of the resultant curricula was nationalistic with a heavy emphasis on good citizenship. Of course, reading, writing and arithmetic were taught either as separate subjects or were incorporated into other activities, but overall the inculcation of patriotic and nationalistic attitudes and religious education were afforded disproportionately more class time.[243]

Remarkably, even the number of hours of operation of schools were lower for the most common type of rural school, classified *Degree #1* (7 year, 4 form, 1 Room). It was required to provide only 16 (forms 1 & 2, years 1 & 2) and

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[243]The number of hours per week to be spent on each subject taught in the *Degree #1* school were as follows:

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*Form 1 = year 1; Form 2 = year 2; Form 3 = years 3 & 4; Form 4 = years 5, 6 & 7.
[Source: Kulczykowska, Anna, Programy Nauczania Historii w Polsce: 1918-1932. Warszawa: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1972., pp.64-65 (table).]

18 (forms 3 & 4, years 3 to 7) hours of instruction per week, as compared to 21 to 30 hours required of the *Degree #3* 7 form, 7 grade) schools that were established, almost exclusively in the urban centres.[244] This meant that the majority of rural schools [245] were required to provide an already altered and perhaps even diluted curriculum in 3/5ths or 60% of the class time made legally available to the two higher degrees or levels of schools. It is not surprising then that only one out of every seventy children from the social classes or groups making the most use of these schools (peasants with small landholdings, agricultural labourers and some urban labourers) advanced to the middle schools and only one out of every 370 to the higher levels.[246] An even more dismal result was that

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[244]Kulczykowska, ibid..

[245]In the school year 1937/38 93.6% of city schools were designated *Degree #3*, while only 9.4% were so designated in the rural areas. In the cities 98.8% of pupils attended *Degree #3* schools while only 27.2% of pupils in the rural areas attended such schools.
[Source: Szymanski, Miroslaw, Modernizacja Systemu Szkolnego na Wsi. Warszawa: P.W.N., 1978, p.75]

In looking over statistical data for the nation it appears that in 1936/37 70% of schools were *Degree #1*, 16% *Degree #2*, and 13% *Degree #3* (with 1% "other").
[Source: Michalski, Stanislaw, Szkolnictwo Powszechne i Zaklady Ksztalcenia Nauczycieli w Wielkopolsce w Okresie Miedzywojennym.. Poznan: Uniwersytet Im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1962, p.86.]

A curious and potentially deceptive set of statistics shows the percentage breakdown of schools according to *Degree*: in 1936/37, 38% of schools were *Degree #1*, 19% *Degree #2* and, 43% *Degree #3* (Michalski, ibid....). When considering these figures it is important to keep in mind that almost all (98.8%) of city children and approximately 1/4 (27.2%) of rural children attended the *Degree #3* schools, while the remaining 72.8% rural and 1.2% urban children attended the "lower level" schools.

[246]Falski, M., Srodowisko spoleczne mlodziezy a jej wyksztalcenie. Warszawa: Nasza Ksiegarnia, 1937, p.63. as

between 1920 and 1929 only 8.4% of rural school children completed the full program of studies - and in the entire Inter-war period only 16% of rural pupils completed the program in the minimum of seven years.[247] The poorer quality of schooling which they received effectively prevented them from advancing without first investing considerable time in upgrading their educations. Many students simply did not have the means to acheive this.

Of course, it may also be argued that many of the pupils of the *Degree #1* (lower level) schools did not advance to the the middle or higher schools because other motivational factors were absent - most notably, the perception that education was a useful "commodity." This means that it had little or no value for people engaged in subsistence agriculture, and, as such, was either ignored, passively resisted or actively resisted. This notion, in turn, appears to support or even resemble the rationale for the MWRiOP's implementation of a scheme of "inferior" education for this group of people.

However ethically flawed the ministry's concept may have been, it did, in fact, reflect certain economic and societal realities. On the other hand, it was neither egalitarian nor democratic, and therefore it brought no

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[246](cont'd) cited in: Szymanski, Miroslaw, Modernizacja Systemu Szkolnego na Wsi. Warszawa: P.W.N., 1978, p.76.
It is worth noting too that the children of owners of larger businesses and landholdings as well as those of professionals (the children attending the *Degree #3* or even private schools) almost all advanced to the middle levels and one out of every four to the higher levels.(ibid.)

[247]Trzebiatowski, op.cit., p.332.

small measure of criticism down upon the Ministry and, indeed, upon the various governments themselves. The fact remains however, that neither the position of the government, nor the criticisms of its opponents (or even of revisionist historians) give a clear description of the system as it was viewed from, and shaped by, the peasant perspective. The influence of this "ignorant," "unevolved" or even "downtrodden" mass has been overlooked or else simply ignored. This body of people did react to the urban/industrial approach to education (as it was imposed upon its members), and through their reactions they determined the shape of the system to a considerable degree.

ii. The Reactions

The Polish peasant's unique reactions to the techno-cultural paraphernalia of urban/industrial society were often a curious and varied mixture of violence and humour. They elicit pathos for the most part, but also they tended to reinforce the perceptions of superiority held by the urbanites. Seldom, if ever, were these reactions seen as anything more than the "childish" outbursts of ignorant people. It was generally accepted that "the village" existed in the worst state of backwardness, and that "progress" (or the "world") *must* be brought to it.

In fact, this "progress", or at least evidence of it, did appear in the villages from time to time, but if it was

slow in coming, it was even slower in being accepted. In the 1930's, writes Bogdan Suchodolski, there was only one library for every 60 villages; 1 book for every 24 villagers; and only 1% of the peasant population listened to the radio regularly.[248] As late as 1927 or 1928, relates another source, some of the old peasant women of a village in West-central Poland circled a radio with chalk, sprinkled it with holy water and, using sticks, they smashed it to bits after hearing a weather warning broadcast on it.[249] Of course, many of the villagers were familiar with radios by that time but it was the opinion of the old women that only "the devil" could foretell the weather. Actually, the incident provided the "more worldly" men of the village (some having served in the army) with considerable amusement.

Another such amusing incident occured when a motorcyclist (motor vehicles of any kind were rarely seen in rural Poland) raised a large cloud of dust as he drove toward the same village. One of the village women stood in her front door-way screaming that the "Anti-Christ" was coming - much to the consternation of the elderly villagers, but to the extreme amusement of the young men.[250]

These peasant reactions to modern technology were quite typical and similar examples could be found throughout the

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[248]Suchodolski, B. Polityka Kulturalno-oswiatowa w Polsce wspolczesnej. Warszawa: n.p., 1936, pp.29-31., as quoted in: Trzebiatowski, op.cit., p.349.
[249]Interview with Apolonia Adamowicz, May 7, 1988.
[250]ibid..

whole country. Inevitably, they became "enshrined" in Polish peasant humour (often scatological in nature) which is, no doubt, the greatest record or repository of the poignant ironies found in life within Polish society of the Inter-war period. A particularly insightful example goes as follows:

> A peasant, "having felt the call of nature" wandered out behind his barn to relieve himself. While squatting back there he noticed a plane flying overhead. He became very excited and started to shout (presumably to his wife who was in the farmyard somewhere), *"Fliga! Fliga!"* but while leaning backward so as to keep his eyes on the plane he promptly fell into his own "business."[251]

The irony, or rather "ironies," in this little joke or story are numerous. The first or most noticeable is the fact that the peasant didn't use the Polish word for airplane, *samolot*, in his shouting. He used something that sounded like the German word for it. Second, his farm was so backward that he didn't even have an outhouse, and thus his privacy could be invaded even from the air. Third, his interest, which should have been on what he was doing (performing an essential human function) was diverted by, or to, something quite marvellous but completely irrelevant to his lifestyle. Fourth, and perhaps most important, was the fact that this peasant was completely overcome by the novelty and excitement of seeing a flying machine in a country which at that time (mid-1920's) was "the second largest and best equipped air power (after France) on the

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[251]A "joke" often told to me as a child - especially when I had become so absorbed in something I was looking at that I failed to notice something else blocking my path and I tripped over it or ran into it.

Continent of Europe."[252]

This story and the others illustrate the techno-cultural isolation in which the Polish peasant lived. Knowledge about the "outside" world was slow to reach these people and when they saw some particularly amazing examples of the technology and culture of the urban "world" they reacted either with wonder or with violence. If they couldn't absorb this new thing into their way of life they ignored it or they violently rejected it. In any event they usually sought to maintain their isolated state. Even the major upheavals caused by various wars failed to break their isolation.

Despite this tendency on the part of the peasants, the outside world was ever more eager to study and to know "the village." In 1914, Znaniecki and Thomas published the first edition of their classic sociological study, The Polish Peasant in Europe and America and in 1924 , Wladyslaw Reymont was awarded the Nobel prize for literature for his book entitled, The Peasants (*Chlopi*). There were also a plethora of less widely known studies, stories and novels - all part of the urban desire to denounce the backwardness and to remedy the situation of the villages. Not surprisingly, education, teachers, and literate "visionaries" became important themes and characters in most of this literature.[253]

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[252]Cynk, op.cit., p.80.

[253]For an interesting description and analysis of this phenomenal aspect of Polish literature see: Hadaczek, Boleslaw, Postac Pedagoga w Literaturze Polskiej. Warszawa:

Formal education or schooling on the urban/industrial model surrounded by such "propaganda" entered the villages of Inter-war Poland (very often for the first time in history) "as a ready-made product of the history of non-rural society."[254] The establishment of this new and intrusive phenomenon, not only threatened to destroy the ancient patriarchal social structures of the villages, but it managed to "disturb the traditional relationship of the "triad of power": the manor - the rectory - the village...."[255] In short, it threatened to obliterate the peasants' way of life and most of their major social structures. This destructive aspect of formal education with all of its implications, was alien and threatening to the peasant philosophy of existence, but it was also potentially revolutionary in that it broke down the barriers which maintained the isolation of the peasants from the rest of society.

The reactions of the peasants reflected their recognition of one potential or the other - or both. Some wholeheartedly accepted education, others were ambivalent to it, while some others, resisted it. In fact, there were four types of resistance evident, with the many individual reasons for this behaviour classifiable under five major categories of rationales.

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[253](cont'd) P.W.N., 1977.

[254]"... *gotowy produkt pozawiejskiej historii spolecznej.*" [Chalasinski, J. Spoleczenstwo i Wychowanie. Warszawa: P.W.N., 1958, p.208. as quoted in Szymanski, op.cit., p.36.]

[255]Szymanski, ibid., p.76.

The peasants' resistance to education is evident in:

1. verbal criticism of, and opposition to, schooling;
2. not providing labour, material or financial aid for the construction of school buildings, libraries, etc.;
3. their failure to register the children for school (500,000 to 1,000,000 children were not attending school);
4. their failure to ensure the regular or adequate attendance of those children who were registered.[256]

The reasons for these behaviours were varied and often they were altered as the peasants' circumstances changed. In other words acceptance of, or resistance to, education were the results of reactions to perceived threats to the social and/or economic status quo. This means that as the peasants' perceptions of the traditional social structures of the village and the desirability of the breaking down of the barriers of their isolation from the rest of the Polish society changed, so too did their reasons for opposing or accepting schooling. Those peasants who had accepted that their traditional way of life and their isolation should be

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[256]We do not have access to statistical data for this occurrence, but we are able to infer from the remarks of various writers and from the 25% annual failure rate of rural students, as well as from the fact that, between 1920 and 1929 only 8.4% completed the entire seven year program of studies, that regular attendance and/or participation was quite often not encouraged.

destroyed or done away with, and that this was desirable, invariably came out in favour of schooling. The other peasants, possibly a sizeable majority who wished to retain many or most aspects of their way of life, were arrayed in a somewhat fluid continuum ranging from those who feared both the destruction of their social structures and the loss of their isolation, to those who wished to create a "modern" peasantist lifestyle independent from the "excesses" of urban society. Those who wished to maintain the traditional way of life but could envision some sort of limited economic liaison with urban society were situated somewhere in the middle of this spectrum. These orientations were, of course, subject to change as the individual adherents (of these views) had either positive or negative economic or political encounters with urban society in general or with urbanites (particularly government officials or bureaucrats) in particular.[257]

Indeed, the fluidity of the peasants' negative attitudes toward education is evidence of their ambiguity - i.e. of their uncertainty as to the basis on which their opposition should rest. The certainty of their resistance lies not so much in the rationales for it but in the fact

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257 At times the attitudes exhibited by the peasants were applied so aggressively or actively that a "class struggle" between their group and the "*inteligencja-cum-szlachta*" stratum of urban society could be seen, but in general the (peasants') attitudes appeared to be too "traditionalist" or too "isolationist" to be typical of such a struggle. If anything, they were too ambivalent and even ambiguous when applied proactively.

that it existed. For a multitude of reasons, many of which were perhaps non-rational or intuitive, the peasants did oppose schooling. If we examine the stories or letters of peasants collected by Znaniecki and Thomas and also by J. Chalasinski[258] for their respective sociological studies of the peasants we can find evidence of the various orientations and of a plethora of individual reasons for resisting formal education.

It must be pointed out that these two studies are also complementary in that the former was completed just as Poland was about to gain independence while the latter was published in 1938, a year before the outbreak of World War II and the resultant collapse of the Second Republic. These studies, therefore, provide us not only with very complete descriptions and analyses of peasant socio-political development, but also with information which might enable us to discover any political, social, and cultural evolutionary patterns that had developed during the years of the existence of the Inter-war Polish regime.

It is worth noting that a fairly definite pattern of acceptance and rejection of education is also evident. In general, the acceptance of education as part of the social framework of village life constantly gained momentum but the acceptance of the urban/industrial conceptions and curricula for schooling appeared at first to grow then it markedly decreased. It appears that while the concept of schooling

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[258]Chalasinski, J., Mlode Pokolenie Chlopow(4 vols.). Warszawa: Panstwowy Instytut Kultury Wsi, 1938.

was becoming more and more acceptable, the manner of instruction and the curriculum content tended to become less so. For some peasants, especially those who had some schooling but failed to gain socially or economically from this, formal education was once again (secondarily) relegated to "valueless status." Thus, the "struggle" to establish formal education as part of village tradition was not even close to being over in September of 1939.

iii. Resistance: The Reasons

Many peasants spoke out against education and the establishment of village schools and then kept their children from attending these because it seemed to them that this entire concept, and especially the reading of non-religious materials, contradicted their traditional religious beliefs and superstitions. Beyond that, social structures and behaviours peculiar to village life were perceived to be threatened also. The following excerpts from letters quoted in the study done by Znaniecki and Thomas illustrate these notions well.

> ...And the result is that the people do not want to read anything and scorn those who read. In some villages the life of an enlightened peasant is a true torture.... [W]hoever reads is particularly detested. An example: A young boy came often to me; he had a great wish to read, he took books and read them. His father went to confession and afterwards forbade him to come to me.... (correspondent commenting on the negative influence of some elitist, probably *Szlachta*, members of the Roman Catholic clergy. (excerpt #94, p.1294).

> What even the priests teach already in Warsaw [the popularized results of science] is still a great sin in the country. (excerpt #94, p.1296.)
>
> Among rich and instructed people one in a hundred can be found honest, but among simple peasants ... one in a hundred can be found dishonest. (excerpt #100, p.1319.)
>
> Father did not send me to school. He always used to repeat: "We have grown old and we cannot read nor write, yet we live. So you, my children, will also live without knowledge."....
> "Snotty fellow, don't you know that, as the old people say, whoever learns written stuff casts himself into hell?" (correspondent quoting his father. - excerpt #114, p.1337).
>
> "Only rich [gentlemen]," she told me, "read papers. For the peasant it is enough to read from his book in church." (excerpt #122, p.1347).

That these attitudes had changed only slightly by the mid-1930's is evident from the letters quoted in Chalasinski's study.[259]

> It is my opinion that religion should be the most important subject [taught] in school. If the young generation will be brought up according to Roman Catholic principles, then [because of this] lawlessness will decrease, thievery and fraud will stop. (correspondent 437/164 K.S.M., p.423.)
>
> The beautiful traditions are disappearing.... Everything is disappearing because, it "isn't fashionable", but in their place we introduce filth, superficialities, city [urban] glitter....
> The same happens with the sons of the village who are in school. It often happens that such a "little son" is ashamed of his father, because his father does not know how to behave in company, on the street, which nonetheless has in it some truth....
> - love of the village and the recognition of its values are not taught enough [in the schools]....
> It is said that, "A peasant ought not to be concerned with anything more than Heaven." (correspondent 1386/163, pp.461-474.)

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[259]Translation from the original Polish is mine.

> In this region nobody has completed agricultural school, but you have to be such an "odd-ball" - so that people will point at you with their fingers. As if I don't have enough things to spend money on, yet for this! Craziness has entered his head. He reads and reads until finally everything has turned upside-down in his head!. (quoting his father's response to his request for money for agricultural school tuition - correspondent 1316/175, p.510.)

> Why should you clutter your head with knowledge when a villager is created for work on the land. (correspondent 121/39, p.11 [vol. IV])

> They teach noble things, proper speach and many other superficial niceties.... The result of this is, "mother is stupid - father is stupid etc.." They start to feel ashamed of them in front of the teacher, in front of the children. (correspondent 254/12, p.34 [vol. IV])

> ...they couldn't come to terms with my thoughtful expression and my reading of books, which was considered excessive.
> I always heard these sharp words addressed to me: "Do you have nothing else with which to occupy yourself, only gazing and gazing into those papers?" (correspondent 203/26, p.62, [vol. IV])

> ... the less school the better, because in school children "forget how to work." (correspondent #?, p.4, [vol. IV])

We can see from these quotations that education and reading were threatening or disturbing to the order and tradition of village life. Schooling however, was also perceived as a threat to the often delicate economic balance of subsistence farming. Not only did schools, school supplies, and clothing required for attendance (everyday clothing and uniforms or aprons) cost money, but children, who were invaluable sources of labour, were taken away from their chores while attending school. The quotations illustrate the feelings and attitudes of the peasants toward

this "intrusion."

The following examples appeared in Znaniecki's and Thomas's study.

> "... there are some [newspapers] which cost a dozen roubles a year each." - "Oh! oh!" says the farmer, "I could buy a pig for this money." (excerpt #118, p.1344.)

> "Well, you only put a great burden upon yourselves and others, and there will be no profit except for the teacher.... But I know who proposed it - those who want to oppress the peasant so that he will never be able to rise." (correspondent quoting one of the village elders. excerpt #120, pp.1344-1345.)

In fact there are a great many more references to the "excessive" or high cost of education. They are usually found within letters (pleading for money) written to family members who had emigrated to the United States, and therefore they may not be the best indicators of the real perceptions of the peasants. On the other hand, the examples found in the Chalasinski study are much more useful for our purposes.

> ... my parents were not well disposed toward the school and said that there will be many teachers and we will have to pay large taxes. (correspondent 1162/98, p.5, [vol. IV].)

> ...I had to tend the geese, later the cows, and help on the farm. (correspondent 121/39 , p.10, [vol. IV].)

> My father ... said these words that... he [I] will be useful to me, in the spring he will tend the cows or the horse and since he knows how to read a little that will be enough. They didn't even teach me that. In that way my schooling ended and all of my efforts and hopes were lost. (correspondent 676/57, pp. 12-13, [vol. IV].)

> My father used to say: Times are tough now and those who have a child in school will suffer

[poverty] the most.

I ask you why do you send the child to school? He answers that there is a fine [for not sending children to school], if there was no fine then I'd never let him go to school, I'd teach him how to plow at home. (correspondent 1316/176, pp. 14-15, [vol. IV].)

Author of biography no. 1363/222 Z.M.W. learned the alphabet and how to read against the wishes of his parents from a more fortunate neighbouring student, but he couldn't go to school because he didn't have [adequate] clothes or shoes. (Chalasinski, vol. IV., p.16.)

Even though I longed to go to school,... I also knew that my parents couldn't [afford to let me go]....(correpondent 1515/439, p. 23, [vol. IV].)

As spring comes and then fall, it becomes necessary to work almost entire weeks on the land, and for learning there was no time even in the evening. ....

Ho, ho, - says my father, and where else wouldn't you like to go, I came up with a suit [for you] right away, so that you could wander the sidewalks with young Jews, throw those books into the box, the bag in the attic, and get to work you lay-about. (correspondent 97/9, pp. 24-25, [vol. IV].)

"You know - he said - that you have seven years, therefore all of the boys and girls who have completed these years must go to school otherwise it is necessary to pay the *sztraf* [Polonized German for *fine*]." .... I thought however that this is some very important personality which knows all seven year old boys. ....

Not having money I stole from home anything I could get my hands on, sold this to the Jewish boy and from this I bought my scribblers and books. (correspondent 746/8, pp.25-27, [vol. IV].)

My parents forced me to go to school because they would have to pay a fine, even though they preferred that I remain at home and tend the geese. (correspondent 964/72. p.30, [vol.IV].)

...[Often] I couldn't go to school because I had to pen and herd the goats. This caused me, despite great efforts on my part, to remain in the fourth grade for two years. For entire springs and autumns I didn't go to school, only in winter....

> My greatest worry during my school days was the impossibility of doing any assigned lessons. Often one wanted to prepare oneself well for the lessons, but at home it was difficult to find the opportunity for this. During the day it was necessary to work in the field or to herd the cows in the woods.... In the evening in fearfulness before my father I spread out my books or scribblers on the corner of the table, but after a few minutes or after several confrontations with my parents... I packed up my books in the hope that in the morning I might be able to make up the deficiencies. (correspondent 1234/112, p.31, [vol.IV].)

> In winter I never went to school, because I lived far from the village and I didn't have any boots. (correspondent 1154/90, p.35, [vol. IV].)

Chalasinski's study contains many more examples of the economic rationales for resisting education probably because they were the most important to the peasants. Certainly, the social and religious problems raised, or created, by schooling were considered to be important, but the paramount concern of all subsistence farmers was survival. When this was threatened by the removal of part of an essential labour-force, i.e. the children, then their natural instinct was to react to the threat. They did this by keeping their children from attending school - at least until they could no longer avoid paying fines or couldn't bribe the teacher or officials anymore. It was quite common practice to keep children home so that they could help with the operation of the farm, and it was equally well accepted that the teacher should be offered a chicken, or eggs or even some butter so that he might "excuse" the student from attendance.[260]

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[260]Interview with Apolonia Adamowicz, May 7, 1988.

Of course, many children were also not encouraged to attend because their parents were entirely negligent - they didn't care whether their children went to school or not. Many other parents simply did not see any value in schooling or any relevance in it to their way of life. A few examples of this may be seen in the Chalasinski study.[261]

> "I will be slaving all my life, but you will be learning to be a lord [*pan*]. (Correspondent 968/76, p.8)
>
> It will be enough for you if you are able to sign your name and to count. You will not be a bureaucrat, you won't learn this and you won't be one. (correspondent 879/73, p.8)
>
> My learning and home work were made more difficult by quips to the effect that I won't be a lord, nor will I become a priest.... (correspondent 1178/89, p.8)
>
> Get it from where you will, I won't give you even a penny, because you won't be eating bread from this learning; we can't all be teachers. (correspondent 302/34, p.8)
>
> "You won't be a lord, what do you need this school for?"
> "We didn't go to school and we're alive, for schools were thought-up by lords for themselves." (correspondent 964/72, p.16)

Often, a partial acceptance of education could be seen in the correspondence quoted in both of the studies. A certain, usually minimal, amount of education was felt to be necessary for the young men who would be going into the army. On the other hand, it was occassionally pointed out that women didn't need schooling because they weren't going, and more probably would just get married and stay on the

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[261]All excerpts are from volume IV.

farm. [262] There seemed not to be any great appreciation of schooling for women - and only limited quantities were deemed to be necessary for men.

The men, it was considered, would profit more from good instruction in agricultural practices than from a knowledge of grammar, philosophy and history. All of these were considered to be irrelevant to the peasant whose main interest was the land. Not surprisingly, we can find in many of the responses to Chalasinski's requests for comments on the school system[263] remarks to the effect that, in general, education is useful, but that it would be more so if it reflected the needs of the village. Some respondents even went so far as to say that a great deal of the curriculum ought to be revised to meet the needs of the peasants. History (as a subject of study), in particular, was singled out most often as being irrelevant to peasants. They would rather study the history of the peasants than that of "magnates, kings, [and] bishops."[264] "Ideally," stated one respondent, "lessons ought to place a greater emphasis on making the errors of the old *Szlachta* odious to

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[262] See: Chalasinski, pp.8, 10, 24-25, 58, 62. Mrs. Adamowicz relates similar personal experiences. Her mother often remarked to her that women didn't need schooling because they were only going to get married and run a household anyway. It is worth noting that her mother had completed the eight-year Prussian *volkschul* and was a fluent speaker of Polish and German and was also literate in both languages! Despite her own education, which would be considered superior by village standards, she seemed to be opposed to the acquisition of any great quantity of it by her children.

[263] See: Chalasinski, chapters I and III in volume IV of Mlode Pokolenie Chlopow.

[264] Chalasinski, ibid., p.414.

children."[265]

Herein lies the source of a secondary impetus or rationale for resistance of education. The ages-old animosity between the *Szlachta* and the peasants surfaced among the more enlightened and aware members of the peasant class after their experiences in the schools. The irrelevant content of the curriculum - especially in its emphasis on the *Szlachta/inteligencia*/urbanite world-view - was perceived to be part of the effort of some dominant elite to impose its control and will upon the peasants. If one also considers the political endeavours of this segment of the peasant population then it becomes evident that a genuine "class-conflict" existed. Whether this was as formidable or as widespread as post-war Marxist historians would have us believe is debatable however.

What is obvious though is that those peasants who had some schooling were dissatisfied with the school system in many ways and that this was causing them not only to question its value, but also to resist it. They weren't gaining much from the system, but they felt that they were losing many of the more valuable aspects of their traditional way of life because of it. The school and the teacher[266] were considered to be alien to their world and

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[265] ibid., p.422.

[266] Teachers were quite often associated with the "upper classes" by respondents to both studies. There are a considerable number of references to teachers being aloof, arrogant and even abusive (verbally and physically) toward the peasant children. Indeed, references to teachers calling their students *chamy* (churls, yokels) and administering bizarre forms of corporal punishment (beatings with sticks,

this "young generation of peasants" began to resist just as their parents had before them.

These attitudes and behaviours of the peasants were quite often incomprehensible to the *inteligencja/szlachta* and to other urbanites, and were mostly considered to be the results of abyssmal ignorance. Since most histories of education are written from the urban perspective, be it "Whig" or "Revisionist," this myth has been perpetuated, and the peasant has been relegated to a position which might be described as "ineffectual." This means that the peasant is perceived to be only the recipient of either the potential benefits or the evils of the system of formal education established in Inter-war Poland. They were not considered to be a major influence on the shaping of this system. Such a notion is erroneous because the peasants had access to political expression through populist/peasantist political parties - atleast for a few years - and they actually resisted the system by not permitting their children to attend. This resistance caused considerable changes to occur at the village school level, eg. school closures, schedule changes, even some adaptations of the curriculum and of pedagogical practices to meet local needs. Unfortunately, it created little more than rhetorical statements and ineffectual legislation at the ministerial level in Warsaw.

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[266](cont'd) kneeling on crushed stone, locking children in cellars) are quite common.
Mrs. Adamowicz recounts similar experiences also. [Interview May 7, 1988]

If the needs and demands of the peasants were seriously considered in Warsaw the responses to these were remarkably unrealistic. An agrarian orientation to the curriculum was never created, and the *Degree #1*, lower level, were not phased out as the Jedrzejewicz Reforms of 1932 had so idealistically intended - also between 500,000 and 1,000,000 children were kept out of the schools. The MWRiOP in Warsaw, and the peasants remained remarkably out of synchronization in their perceptions of the educational needs of rural Poland even to the last days of the existence of the Second Republic.

VI. CONCLUSION

> If you maintain that something interests you, consider whether it is people who interest you, or whether you regard as people those who interest you.[267]

This admonition to all those engaged in the study of mankind, its nature, and its behaviour is particularly applicable to historians. Too often, even the most serious members of this community of researchers, ignore the majority of the people and write about a small segment as if it were the totality of the population. Often too they write about particular minorities *vis-a-vis* the majority or some dominant elite group while excluding others within the population. Evidently, to these writers "the people" are those who are the direct and indirect subjects of the work. What then, is to be said about all the others; those who have been relegated to some sort of "non-historic" status?

The immediate impulse is to label this question as "rhetorical" and to explain either that written histories ought to be broadened, but for the sake of convenience this is not done, or that the ethnoghraphic atomization of subjects of historical study may be carried to absurd lengths and is therefore not advisable.

On reflection though, it should become more obvious that broader histories, especially those constructed of

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267 *Jesli twierdzisz, ze cos cie interesuje, zastanow sie, czy interesuja cie ludzie, czy uwazasz za ludzi tych, ktorzy cie interesuja.*

Anonimous. Quoted in, Pacholski, Maksymilian, Florian Znaniecki: Spoleczna Dynamika Kultury. Warszawa: P.W.N., 1977, p.192.

"ethnographic particles or atoms" should provide us with more accurate and complete descriptions of the functioning of given societies. The problem to be overcome however is the reduction of data to manageable quantities, - and, this may be accomplished by adopting a new historiographical approach. Of course, this demands a radical shifting of perspective from one historical paradigm to another, and this is not easily accomplished.

In the case of this study, it was suggested that the traditionally "Polish" and *Szlachta* (including urban/industrial elements) perspectives provided too narrow a scope to allow for a complete understanding of the dynamics of the "multicultural" Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Second Republic. It was also emphasized that they failed to provide any major insights into the reasons for the various behaviours of the peasants who comprised the majority of the population.

The proposed solution to the first problem was a "particularization" - into studies of ethnic groups - which would not only recognize the multi-ethnic and multicultural nature of the two Republics, but would, after re-assembly of all of the "parts" into a new "whole," provide a more comprehensive history.

The solution to the second problem - that of including the peasants - was much more radical in approach. It was suggested that at least part of it lay in the application of socio-cultural evolutionary schemes worked out by

anthropologists, especially that of the notion of three usually successive societies: the primary or hunting and gathering/nomadic; the secondary agrarian (peasant), and; the tertiary or urban/industrial society. This was to provide the basis for the development of a better understanding of the relationships between the urbanites (the *Szlachta*, the elite of the new, post-1863, "heirarchic order" and, other historically and nationally conscious urban-dwellers) of the tertiary society of Inter-war Poland and the peasants of the secondary. If we look at these relationships as the interactions between two different societies rather than taking the traditional uni-societal approach we can reduce the number of seemingly random and irrational points of opposition to several major categories of behavioural and attitudinal divergence. This shifting of socio-historical paradigms would, therefore, allow us to reduce the quantity of data available to manageable proportions. It would also allow us to broaden the "history" of Poland to include the peasants and also ethnic minorities of peasant origin, (eg. Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and Lithuanians) as "historic" peoples.

The adherence to the Spenglerian conception of history, wherein the behaviours of urban-oriented radical builders and destroyers are mistaken for those of all mankind, must be challenged. The peasants, the practitioners of a style of living which precludes mobility on any great scale[268],

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[268]In fact, there have been migrations of peasants throughout history. Peasants, as the practitioners of

should not be overlooked as a force in the shaping of world history. The peasant may be "the eternal man, independent of every culture that ensconces itself in the cities..." but he is also the "origin and the source of the blood that makes world-history in the cities."[269] In this way and through more direct confrontation, his ideas, in fact his "world-view," have caused the course of world-history to be altered many times, but the peasant has seldom been given credit for these actions.

Only within the last one hundred years have peasantism and agrarian populism been recognised as the ideological bases for political forces - but even these have been attacked and described as "unevolved, " anti-intellectual, " and "reactionary." Perhaps, when they are placed along-side urban ideologies they do appear to be such, but it would be erroneous to make such a comparison in the first place. The political ideologies of the more historically and nationally

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[268](cont'd) peculiar types of agriculture were imported and exported by the rulers of European countries for centuries. The Polish Kings encouraged the immigration of German and Dutch peasants to the Kingdom of Poland and later to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Russians Tsars did likewise. It was not until late in the 19th century that the "Great Migrations" of peasants began - to Brazil, America, and the Dominion of Canada.

Could it be that these massive migrations have not had the impact in history that they should have because these peasants didn't respond with "fire and sword" when urbanization and industrialization forced them to move? The Avars, Huns and Mongols were fewer in number when they made their respective moves, but they applied their steel not as ploughs to the ground but as swords to slaughter the city dwellers and to take their wealth.

The Nomads, members of the primary society, have made their mark in history, yet the peasants have not!

[269]Spengler, op.cit., p.96.

conscious or "aware" peasants were, and are, the result of a world-view, philosophies, and traditions that bear only little semblance to those of urban dwellers. Therefore, they cannot be compared from an urban historical-cultural perspective. They must be seen as the product of the interactive efforts of two different societies trying to co-exist in some politically democratic (if even "ideally" democratic), or perhaps even some other constitutional system. They (peasant political ideologies) may also be seen to be resulting from attempts to capitalize on, or to make use of some parliamentary medium which has only relatively recently become accessible to larger portions of the population.

If the political and broad social manifestations of the peasants - i.e. peasantism and agrarian populism - become rational and valid when seen in this light, then so too should the peasants' responses or reactions to formal public education. The establishment of this institution as an element intrinsic in the society is virtually contemporaneous with the rise of more representative parliamentary democracy, and it (public education) also was created to satisfy the needs of the nobility and the urban dwellers.

Once public education became an institution *de facto* in the cities, it was established *de jure* in the country-side - i.e. among the peasantry. The peasants, of course, reacted to this in various ways, but in general their acceptance of

this "new institution" was slow. The number of peasants who initially accepted public education whole-heartedly was probably quite small compared to the number who rejected or resisted it. Yet, the histories of education written from either the "Whig" or the "Revisionist" perspectives emphasize mainly that the peasants either failed to take advantage of education or that they were deprived of it.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the reactions of the peasants to the system of education implemented in the rural areas and to determine whether resistance to education is a factor in the development of a system of public education in the rural areas of Inter-war Poland. An analysis of materials in many secondary sources containing statistical data, descriptions of programs and interpretations of these, was carried out. After that, primary sources were also consulted. These included the correspondence and biographies found in two major studies of the peasants resident within the boundaries of the Inter-war Republic, and personal interviews with witnesses to, and participants in many of the events in the period 1918-1939. The conclusion reached was that rejection of, and resistence to education was indeed a major factor in the development of the system, and that this was due not to negligence or ignorance so much as to the feeling that formal education was incompatible with the traditional way of life of the peasants. The implementers of the system ignored, or completely discounted the highly developed and ancient "oral

traditions" of the peasants. Schools in their turn, threatened to upset the economic schemes typical of subsistence agriculture, and to destroy the traditional social order which was dependent upon the techno-cultural isolation of the villages.

When the establishment of schools in the villages is viewed from the anthropological perspective - i.e. the "two societies" view - it becomes apparent that the urban/industrial or tertiary level elite was attempting to gain and later to consolidate its control over the politically and economically preponderant rural "masses." In other words, a comparatively small urban/industrial society was trying to assimilate the larger agrarian society. The urban elite recognized that the general world-view of the peasant society was radically different from its own, and that this society was becoming increasingly unsympathetic and even culturally hostile to it as it was coming to national and historical consciousness. The solution was to break down the barriers of isolation surrounding the agrarian society, to destroy its traditional social structures, and to bring this body of people around to acceptance of the urban/industrial world-view. Public education, which in the first half of the twentieth century was almost universally considered to be a means of societal reform, came to be the medium by which this was to be accomplished.

The theme or perhaps slogan of this reform of the society was "modernization" in a techno-cultural sense. Unfortunately, this rather abstract notion was subject to many different interpretations, and these came to create more problems by generating confusion and false expectations among both the urbanites and the peasants.

Indeed, this confusion and abundance of conflicting views and expectations has lingered to the present day and even tends to affect the objectivity of any studies of the interactions between the agrarian and urban societies. It is very difficult to avoid making value judgments about the actions of the urban elite or the behaviour of the isolated and "unaware" peasants. The thing to keep in mind regarding the methodology and historiographical perspective of this study is that it never presupposes a total homogeneity of the groups or that there is a uniformity of action either on the part of the peasants or of the urbanites. Rather, it is based on the understanding that there were many levels and types of action and ideas - and that these fall into broader or more general categories. In turn, that the impacts of these various "blocs" can be estimated or in some cases even accurately determined.

The peasantry of Inter-war Poland were the descendants of the peasants and serfs from the most ancient tribes of Slavs to settle in the area, German and Dutch immigrant peasants, Jewish, Armenian, Lithuanian, Karaite, and Tatar peasants, and of course the unique "peasant nobility" of

Szlachta origin. Their racial, religious, and linguistic backgrounds were very diverse, and so too were their approaches toward interaction with "the ouside world." The experiences of the peasants in their dealings with the Polish - Lithuanian - Ruthenian *Szlachta* and later with their Prussian, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian overlords also deeply affected their views of the "urban world" and their desires to interact with it.

The urbanites for their part, were disposed toward interaction with the so-called "peasant classes" in many different ways. The traditionally conservative *Szlachta* element left-over from the "old heirarchy" survived in various places; the *Szlachta-cum-inteligencia* of the new order became increasingly distant and paternalistic; the middle classes were generally indifferent; and, the urban/industrial proletariat remained unsure of their attitude but were generally sympathetic.

This study recognizes that all of this diversity of background and orientation could only generate equally diverse approaches and behaviours. There are however, certain common "threads" observed throughout the cultures and behaviours of the peasants - the philosophical attitudes and notions inherent in "Peasantism" and also the agrarian variant of populism. This is presumed to be the general philosophical and ideological basis for the behaviour of the peasants, and especially for their reactions to formal public education.

In a nutshell, these reactions appeared to tend most strongly toward resistance in the first instance, and to rejection or demands for modification of the curriculum in the second. The urban/industrial form of education was most often perceived to be an intrusion into the rural way of life, and also for those who accepted it at first, its irrelevance became rapidly obvious. In addition, those peasants who attended school came to realize that the lower level rural schools did not facilitate advancement in the system. In this way the problem of "education for the rural population" took on the dimensions of a class conflict.

These findings and conclusions differ from those of other historians of Polish education in that they approach the problem of "rural education" from an anthropological perspective which is not only cognizant of the unique world-view of the peasants but attempts to raise it to a level of validity equal to that of the modern urban/industrial world-view.

Hopefully a "persistent reader" of this study does not always see "twenty centuries as twenty days,"[270] nor does he come to the conclusion that "Of earthly civilization . . . we'll say nothing...."
"For nobody really knows what it was."[271]

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[270]Milosz, Czeslaw, "Readings" In, Bells in Winter. New York: Echo Press, 1974, p.10.
[271] Milosz, "Tidings" In, Milosz, ibid., p.5.

A. Suggestions for Further Study

While the scope of this study was not overly narrow it was somewhat restrictive in that it could not be extended to include any great number of agricultural economic factors and their relevance to the issue of formal public education. For example, the reading of newspapers and journals and subsequent changes in agricultural practices were not brought into the discussion as related items. Neither were the influences of these factors on education discussed at length. Never-the-less, they were important and deserve to be studied further.

The peasants' gradual acceptance of the importance of literacy and the whole phenomenon of Reading Clubs, Itinerant Libraries (Book Clubs), and the eventual rise of the Peoples' Universities or "Folk High Schools" (on the Danish model) have not been analyzed from a peasantist perspective. There has been some work done in this area, but only from a rather "Whiggish" perspective in that most researchers tend to see this as part of some very noble or valiant efforts of the peasants to improve themselves and their way of life.

Interestingly, the "reading movement" seemed to be more of an adult phenomenon rather than one associated with children - as it tends to be in post-war North America (bookmobiles, libraries, etc.). It appears that while the peasants of Inter-war Poland were willing to accept the emphasis of formal education on literacy (because this

literacy could perhaps be useful to an adult farmer), they were unwilling to accept many of the other aspects of the curriculum. Thus, "book knowledge" was not seen to be something of use to children - but the acquisition of the ability to read and to write was. This curious attitude toward "what was useful or not useful for children to know" was part of a peculiar peasantist concept of childhood. The relationship of this concept to attitudes toward education and many other issues certainly deserves the attention of researchers from various disciplinary backgrounds.

It would, no doubt, be profitable for these and other researchers to broaden the focus and to examine the changes in attitudes and lifestyles of Polish peasants who had emigrated from Poland during and immediately after World War II. It would be interesting to see how they fared in their new countries of residence, and how their attitudes and world-view changed in these places. It would also be interesting to know what their attitudes toward the education of their children had become, and if these children had developed some new attitudes which might perhaps be different from those held by the dominant groups of their countries of residence.

Researchers could perhaps include this study of the Polish peasant immigrants in some broader study or studies which would examine the phenomenon of peasant migration. Since at least the nineteenth century there have been mass movements of peasants around the globe - particularly to

North and South America. The Polish and Ukrainian migrations to Brazil, the United States and Canada have already been mentioned, but it should be noted that various other peasant minority groups or sub-groups like the Hutterites, Mennonites, Doukhobors, Old Believers also migrated to these continents during roughly the same time period. The forces behind these migrations and those generated by the migrants themselves are worthy of serious study, especially since these people influenced the development of the major states on the two continents of the western hemisphere.

Developments on the eastern hemisphere, particularly in Asia, and especially on the Indian sub-continent should not be overlooked either. Currently, the largest population of peasants in the world resides there. Comparative studies of the evolution of peasantism and agrarian populism would definitely be in order here because the fear of fulfillment of the Malthusian "prophecy" is most easily aroused by the behaviours of the peasants in these areas. Urbanites from around the whole world tend to identify these peasants with the "population explosion" and famine. They tend to see only ignorance, illiteracy, and stubborn adherence to tradition as the attributes of these subsistence farmers. Perhaps the strengths and other positive aspects of their peasantism could be exploited or enhanced and some major collision between the urban/industrialized world and these peasants could be averted.

By studying and knowing the attitudes and behaviours of peasants living anywhere on the globe we ought to be able to facilitate co-existence between the three societies - nomadic, peasant, and urban/industrial. Currently, relations between all of these are being seriously strained in many arenas, but most importantly over the issue of maintenance of the ecological balances of the world. Urban/industrial society tends to pollute the environment with chemicals, the nomadic hunters and gathers tend to bring already endangered species closer to extinction by hunting "protected" animals, and the peasants cause almost incredible amounts of damage in their quest for arable land and wood fuel. Peasants are being blamed for serious erosion problems in Nepal and China. They are also accused of contibuting to the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide levels and the subsequent "Green-house effect" by the burning of forests in South America.

Ominously, the most powerful society of the three, is beginning to pay serious attention to the environmental damage caused by the other two societies. If no effort is made to understand the background or motivation of the two weaker societies, and punitive action is seen as the only method of control then the results will certainly be catastrophic from the human perspective. Researchers may be able to provide the information and other materials necessary for an understanding required to avert such a catastrophe.

Obviously then, these "suggestions for further study" envision quantities and directions of work that go beyond the sometimes mundane realm of "academic inquiry" in the field of education but it is hoped that they will be found to be useful.

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